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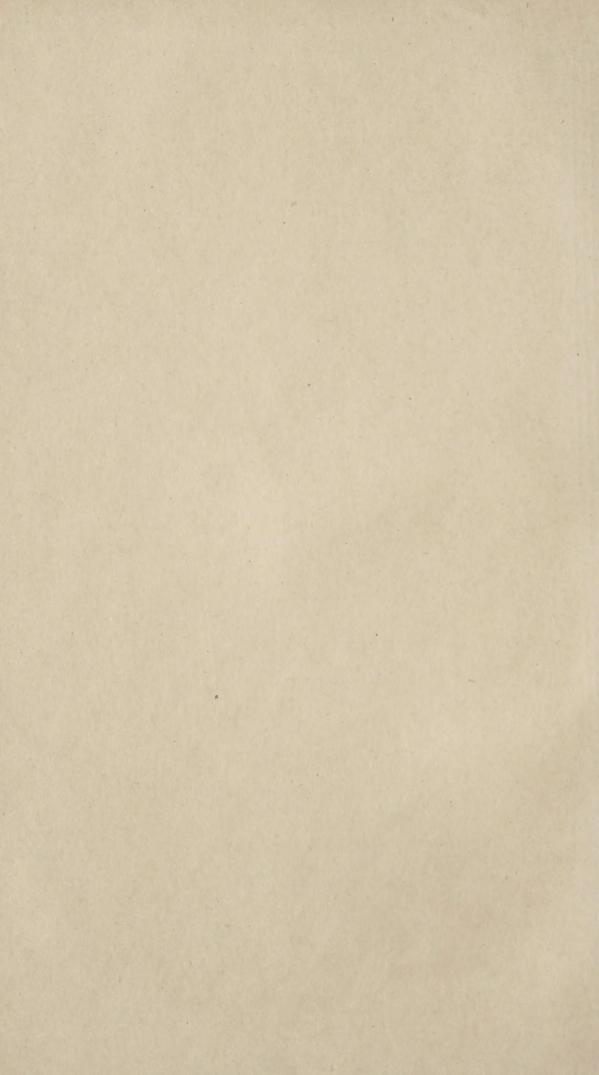
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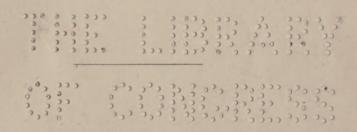
AUNT JANE AND HER LUCK CHARM.
Page 17.

THE STAGE OF LIFE

A KENTUCKY STORY

-BY-

ELLANETTA HARRISON



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1903

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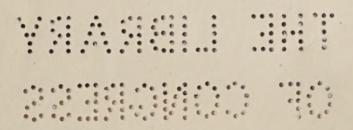


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CHAPTER I.

'Mamma, what was it I heard papa saying to you this morning? You've looked so sad ever since," said Nina Boise, looking earnestly into her mother's pale, troubled face.

"I can't tell you just now, Nina," her mother replied, and sighed deeply as she threw herself upon a couch. "Pick up that shawl, daughter, and spread it over me."

"Mamma, dear, are you chilly, when this room is so warm?" asked Nina.

"Somewhat—darling; mamma must rest now; don't disturb her," said Mrs. Boise.

Driven thus to her own resources, Nina stood by the window watching the rain. All was dark and dreary outside, and seemed but to reflect the gloomy forebodings that filled the child's mind. She felt that something must be wrong, but little realized what sorrow was in store for her, or what a sad change was soon coming into her bright young life — a life that had been filled with such happiness and sunshine as none but a loving mother can put into the daily experiences of a little child. She looked at her mother's sweet face

now, as, with closed eyes and brows contracted as if she were in pain, Mrs. Boise lay white and still.

"I wonder what can be the matter," thought Nina; "it must be something dreadful. I never saw mamma look so sad. She hasn't smiled once this whole livelong day!"

Presently Mrs. Boise opened her eyes, and another long-drawn, quivering sigh escaped her.

"I haven't disturbed you, mamma, have I?"
Nina asked.

Without answering, Mrs. Boise raised herself, and pushed her hair from her face and temples with a gesture which showed she was deciding to make some unpleasant and painful effort.

"My child," she began, "the doctor says I must go to Europe; says it is very important for my health that I go at once."

"Does he, mamma, and do you mean to go?" questioned Nina.

"I am afraid I must, my darling," answered her mother.

"Not and leave me, mamma?"

The child's imploring tone and look of mingled terror and sorrow took from her mother all power of replying in words, but Nina understood the silent answer too well. With a wild cry she threw both arms around her mother's neck and gave way

to such violent grief that it seemed as if body and soul would be rent in twain. The sensitive, affectionate child loved her mother, nay, worshiped her, with all the strength of her being. She felt that this sweet mother, with her smiles, her caresses and guiding hand, was the one thing in the wide world she could not live without.

Mrs. Boise was a quiet woman in all things, but had for some time been weak and ill, and herself gave way to a sorrow scarcely less violent in its expression than Nina's own. Alas! she had good reason. She knew that the chance of her ever returning to shield the little creature nearest her heart from the future evils and snares of life was very small. She had at first refused to leave her child, declaring she would rather die than take the chance of recovery at such a cost. Her physician insisted, however, that unless she had an immediate change of climate and entire freedom from care, her days were numbered. She had begged to have Nina go with her, but her husband thought the doctor's orders should be carried out absolutely, and that she should be relieved of even the care of her little daughter. It was hard, but she had at last consented to make the sacrifice and She trust in Him who gave her child, for the rest. had dreaded to open the matter to Nina, and

nothing but necessity gave her the courage to do so. She was prepared for her child's grief, but not for the passionate paroxysms of weeping that, one after another, shook the little frame; the calmness and self-control she had determined to maintain were impossible—nature was too strong. Her tears fell like rain as they clasped one another in convulsive embraces. After some moments Mrs. Boise regained composure, but Nina continued weeping and sobbing as if her very heart were broken. Mrs. Boise grew alarmed.

"Nina! Nina! listen to me," she said. "This is not right, my child. Remember, darling, who it is that brings this sorrow upon us. We must try and bear it bravely. Though we must sorrow, dear, we must not rebel. You hurt both yourself and me, my daughter. God sends no trouble upon us but in love, and though all seems dark now, the clouds will break and all will be glorious in the end. Mamma will return to you strong and well. Then we will be happy again. Your papa has secured a home for you with your Uncle Thomas St. Clair and your Aunt Frances. Uncle Thomas writes that all care will be taken of you, that Aunt Frances will be glad to have you in her home and look after you."

Nina stopped crying after a while, but con-

tinued to sob. She hid her pathetic little tear-stained face in her mother's lap and tried to listen, but — oh, the days and weeks, and may be years, looked so empty, so gloomy, so terrible, without her precious mother — the mother from whom she had never been separated a day in her life! The first great sorrow of her life had come, or soon would come, upon the child, and with keen sensibility and insight she realized what suffering it would bring her.

When her mother had finished talking to her, Nina arose and went softly from the room. She had often seen her mother read the Bible when troubled or suffering, and now she went to her own little room, and after she had bathed her swollen eyes, began to read the twenty-third psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

"No! no!" sobbed Nina, "I can't say that I do fear evil. I fear my dear mamma will never return to me! Oh, how can I bear it! How can I bear it!"

"Nina!" her mother called, "it is bed-time, darling."

She went and pressed a good-night kiss upon her mother's face, who said, as she embraced her child: "Trust in God, dear, and he will bring sweet peace to your heart."

The resigned look in the dear, sad mothereyes — eyes so full of understanding and sympathy — awed and subdued Nina. She returned to her room and began to get ready for bed. She looked around, and the tears rolled down her cheeks again. There were the cushions, the tidies, and all the pretty things her mother had made for her. "Dear old room," she said, "I've got to leave you and the house where I've always been with my dear mamma and papa. Papa will return, may be; but, oh, I am so afraid my sweet mamma will not come back to me — and I shall never live in my own dear home again!"

Presently she heard her father coming up the stairs.

"Nina, child, what's the matter? Why don't you retire?" he said, opening the door. "I'm afraid your crying will disturb your mother."

"Oh, papa, was I crying? I didn't know it. I don't want to disturb her," sobbed Nina. "Well, come kiss your papa good-night, then go to bed and to sleep, like a good girl."

After he had gone, Nina went to bed, but it was long before sweet slumber finally closed her swollen eyes and made her, for a time at least, forget her troubles.

CHAPTER II.

When Mrs. Boise opened her eyes the next morning, Nina was looking into her face.

"How do you feel, mamma?" she asked.

"Well, about the same, daughter," said Mrs. Boise, drawing her child to her and kissing her softly. "Nina, daughter, it's very early. Go back to your room," said Mrs. Boise. "Mamma can not get up yet."

Nina returned to her room and opened the window. It was a smoky September morning. She could see nothing to cheer her. All looked just as she felt — full of sadness.

After a time she remembered that her mother had told her when sorrow was upon her to always go to God in prayer. She knelt by her bed and tried to ask him to be with her, but deep sobs choked her. Soon, though, a hymn she had often heard her mother sing came to her:

"I delivered thee when bound, And, when bleeding, healed thy wounds; Sought thee, wondering, set thee right, Turned thy darkness into light."

Suddenly the sun came forth, and Nina arose from the floor with a smile.

"I believe God has promised me light!" she exclaimed.

Yes, Nina, dear, God has promised all his children light, and after we have desired it with our whole soul and sought for it with our whole strength, gleams of God-given light will shine into our minds, not because we've striven for it, but because only then can our minds perceive it.

When Nina went into the dining-room that morning, she found her sweet mother there waiting for her with a smile and a kiss, though the child could see tears had recently been in her mother's eyes.

- "Did you get to sleep again, Nina, dear?" her mother asked.
- "No, mamma, I have been up since five waiting for you," answered Nina.
- "What did you do all that time, my daughter?" questioned Mrs. Boise.
 - "I was looking at the sky, mamma."
- "And were you thinking of him who made the sky?" asked her mother.
- "Not all the time. I wonder, mamma, if he will care for me after you are gone?"
- "Yes, darling; he cares for you now, and will care for you then more than mamma can—if you will only put your trust in him, Nina!"

"Mamma, won't you tell me just what you mean by 'putting my trust in him'?" she said.

"Yes, daughter. How do you trust me?" asked Mrs. Boise.

"Well, mamma, I believe every word you say. I am not afraid when you are near, because I know you won't let any harm come to me. I am so happy and love you so dearly that I wish I could live forever and always be with you," Nina said.

"Now, dear, that is just the way you must feel toward your heavenly Father. He is wiser, truer, stronger by far than I am, and so willing to help you when you ask him. He will be with you and love you when I am away from you. What would you do, Nina, if — if I should never return?"

"Oh, mamma, mamma! you will come back, won't you?" cried the child, melting into tears and clasping her arms around her mother.

"Hush, dear; of course I'll come back—if God permits it. There, there; I hear the doctor coming."

Mrs. Boise wiped the tears from Nina's eyes and tried hard to keep back her own.

"Well, Miss Nina, what do you think of this fine scheme of mine?" said the doctor, taking her small hand.

"What scheme, sir?" she asked.

"Why, the scheme of sending this sick mother of yours over the water to get well," he explained.

"Will it make her quite well, doctor?" questioned Nina, earnestly.

"To be sure it will!" he replied. "I shouldn't want to send any one all the way across the ocean for nothing! Who do you think would want Dr. Jones if he sent people on wild goose chases in that kind of style?"

"Will she have to stay very long, doctor?" asked Nina.

"Well, my dear, I can not say. It will depend upon circumstances," he said, taking his patient's wrist and looking attentively into her face. "Little lady," he exclaimed, turning to Nina presently, "I have a little business with you. Weren't you to be my nurse? Well, Miss Nursy, this lady I put under your care is not so well. You have been letting her get nervous. Excitement is very bad for her. She may laugh all she wants to, but you must see to it that she does not cry. I want her to start as soon as she can possibly get up. The quicker she gets away, the greater is her chance of getting well quick. Don't look so sober about it, little girl. All you have to do is just to let

mamma be 'like a mouse'—very quiet, you understand. Well, good-morning, Mrs. Boise. I'll be back to-morrow."

"Poor woman!" he said to himself as he went out; "I hope she will live to get to the other side. And poor little girl! poor little girl! How forlorn and pathetic she looked at the prospect of parting from her mother! Well, well, she's young and a child, and will doubtless forget and be happy in a few weeks, at most!"

Ah, doctor, children don't always "forget in a few weeks," or a few months, or a few years, and this child will not.

"Mamma," said Nina, "I'm going to write to you every day, and tell you all I'm doing. I can pretend I'm talking to you, can't I? Then I won't be so lonesome. I wish I had seen my Aunt Frances and Uncle Tom. Uncle Tom is your only brother, isn't he? And is Aunt Frances papa's only sister?"

"Yes, dear, they are the only aunt and uncle you have," her mother replied.

"Do you think they will like me, mamma?"

"Of course they will like you, my child. You must be good, and they can't help loving you."

"Do you love them, mamma?" asked Nina.

"Well, Nina, it has been a long time since I've seen them, but they are our only relations, and I feel very kindly toward them for promising to take such good care of you, darling. You will find them different from us, perhaps, not like papa and mamma, but I hope you will love them and they will love you. You'll have a nice little cousin there, near your own age. You must help Auntie in all that she wants you to, and be sweet to your cousin."

"Mamma, I want to have so many things done to show you when you come back," said Nina. "I am going to be such a good girl, mamma, and I'm going to pray every day for you to get well. I will try and trust in God the way you said. I wish I was as good as you are, mamma; but I'll try so hard to be good, and then we will meet in heaven some day, if — if — not on earth."

Tears were running down her cheeks again.

"My dear, you are getting sad, and mamma will get the blues. Come, we must be as cheerful as we can. I sometimes think, dearest, losing me may be the means of your getting a better friend."

"What friend, mamma, in the whole world could be better or as good as you?"

"The Friend, dear, 'that sticketh closer than

a brother'— or a mother!" she said. "What do you want mamma to get you before you start?" she added, in a bright tone.

"Why, am I going alone, mamma?" asked Nina.

"Papa can not go, dear, nor can I, but we will trust you in the keeping of some one," said her mother.

"All I want you to get me are paper and things to write to you with," said Nina.

"I shall get you a Bible, Nina, and I want you to read it often. What kind of a Bible would you like?" asked Mrs. Boise.

"Any you select will please me, mamma, and I want your name in it, too. I'll read it often, and will pray always for you to return to me well. Do you suppose, mamma, God will grant that one thing?"

"If you trust, believing, I believe he will," said Mrs. Boise. "You must feel toward him as you would toward me. Wouldn't you ask me for a dress, believing I would get it for you?"

"Yes, mamma," Nina answered; "of course I would believe you would get it for me."

"Well, when you ask God for anything, just believe he will grant it, and you will surely be satisfied," said Mrs. Boise. "Come, dear, and look at your trunk and your nice new clothes."

"I always wanted a trunk, but, oh, dear, now that I have one, I can see nothing but sadness in it. It—it looks like a—a coffin to me!"

"Well, daughter, that will all vanish after a while, and you will then enjoy the things mother has got for you."

"How can I enjoy anything until you return, mamma? Oh, when you return, won't we be happy then! I wonder who will care for me on the journey to Uncle's. It will be strange to go anywhere without you, mamma."

"I should love to take you to Uncle's and see you settled, but I can't, dear. Your father said he would find some friend who was going to Knoxville within a few days, who would take charge of you; and, my precious child, you will have the same eye to watch over you there that you have here—the all-seeing, ever-seeing eye of God."

"Oh," said Nina, "if I could only trust God as you do, mamma!"

CHAPTER III.

"Thy path is plain and straight: that light is given. Onward in faith! and leave the rest to heaven."

"Come in, Aunt Jane," said Mrs. Boise, as the black face of the colored "aunty," who had been Nina's nurse, appeared at the half-open door. "How do you feel to-day?"

"Well, jis' tol'a'ble, Missus. I jis' come up to see Miss Nina 'fore she go away. I had a luck cha'm I wanted fer to give her. It's gole. Aunt Jane foun' it when she was a slave, an' she made a wish, an' sho as the sun do shine it come true! I want my Nina chile to make a wish, an' wear the cha'm all the time her ma is gone, an' it will sho'ly bring her luck. But we mus' all pray that we may meet again in this ole worl', fer lemme tell you, chile, Aunt Jane do feel pow'ful bad sometimes, an' seems like I'se jis' waitin' that summons, 'Chile, come home'; an' then I git to thinkin' 'bout Peter an' John an' all that's gone afore, an' I jis' think, 'You ole black Jane, you don' need to be a-feared'; but when you's gone away, little Missis, Aunt Jane won't have no one to bring her somethin' to eat when she's sick; an' how I'll hate to see the ole home here without my chile!"

Nina took the charm. Upon one side was engraved:

"I will not forsake thee in dark hours of need."

"Oh, mamma!" said Nina, "that seems as if it was God speaking to me. I will always wear it, Aunt Jane; and dear, old, black Auntie, will you pray for me?"

"God bless you, honey. Of cou'se I will pray fer you; less see, 'bout eight at night an' 'bout six eb'ry mawnin'; an' now good-by. God bless you, chile, and yo'r sweet ma."

Nina threw both arms around Aunt Jane's waist and began to cry. "Oh, Aunt Jane, I won't see any one but strangers, may be, ever again!"

"Don' you cry, honey," said the good old soul. "You's good, an' the Lawd 'll take care o' you."

After Aunt Jane had gone, Mrs. Boise took from her casket a slender gold chain, placed the charm on it, and locked it around Nina's neck.

"Mamma," said she, looking up with tears in her sweet blue eyes, "Mamma, that shall stay locked until you return. You please keep the key."

Mrs. Boise then talked to Nina long and earnestly about life and duty, what true living was, and what God expected of all his children. The child listened attentively, then she talked, telling her

mother her thoughts and feelings, her hopes and fears, and asking all manner of questions. Her very soul drank in her mother's replies, for she felt that this beautiful mother, whom she loved so dearly, and whom she regarded the whole eleven years of her life as the one fountain of infallible wisdom and goodness, would soon be far, far away from her. Occasionally, when a full realization of what this meant came over her, her little heart would almost stop beating, her face grow white with fear. Then she would put her arms around her mother and gaze into her face, and the mother would understand and would strain her child to her heart, and talk on, trying to calm her child's fears.

Late in the afternoon a message came from Mr. Boise, saying that he would not be home to tea, and that he might be detained down town until late. So Mrs. Boise and Nina had to have their tea without him; and afterwards, when bedtime came, Mrs. Boise, invalid though she was, would not deny herself the pleasure of putting Nina to bed, as she used to do when Nina was a little child. She held her in her arms and heard her precious one's prayer to God for safe-keeping through the night, then tucked her in bed and sang to her until the child, made happy by her mother's loving ministrations, fell asleep.

When Mr. Boise came home, some hours later, his first words were: "Well, I have found a fine opportunity for Nina at last."

His poor wife could not reply. He little realized what a pang went through her heart. Her face grew white; her lips were thin and blue; but she only closed her eyes and kept quite still.

"I am so glad to be relieved of that burden, and now we can get off directly. 'Tis time, I'm sure, for, dear, you look worse every day," he said.

"A burden!" thought Mrs. Boise; "that precious child, the light of my heart, the breath of my body, a burden!" "When will she start, and with whom?" she asked, faintly.

"Early to-morrow morning with Mrs. Knight and her daughter and servant," replied Mr. Boise. "So you see the child will be well taken care of. Such a fine opportunity. Captain Knight you've heard me speak of, and a better man or truer gentleman never lived. I have known him a long time. I went with him to see his wife this evening. She is a very handsome woman, and was quite pleasant; seemed very willing to have Nina go with her. She will come for Nina at six in the morning."

"So early!" exclaimed Mrs. Boise. "Why, Sarah won't have breakfast ready by that time."

"Well, that won't matter. They will get their breakfast on the boat," said Mr. Boise.

"On the boat!" repeated his wife.

"Yes; they go by boat as far as Kingston, a distance, I should say, of some three hundred miles from Louisville; then they have several hours' ride in a stage-coach before reaching Knoxville."

"Do you think I'd better call Nina and tell her?" asked Mrs. Boise.

"No, indeed. My dear wife, what are you thinking of? You would both get so worked up you couldn't sleep, and she would not be fit, when morning comes, to start. I'll see that she is wakened early enough in the morning, and she won't lay awake to-night thinking about her trip."

"Well," said Mrs. Boise, "if she *must* go, I shall have to pack up her precious little things to-night."

"Can't I do it? You ought to be in bed and asleep," said Mr. Boise.

"No, no! I prefer to do it myself," his wife replied.

Nina's things were all ready, and it did not take Mrs. Boise long to put them in the new trunk that stood waiting for them. No one but God and the suffering, grief-stricken mother knew what bitter tears fell in the trunk with them. When she had finished this last "labor of love" she could perform for her darling child, she stood by Nina's bed a moment. The child's lips were moving. Mrs. Boise bent over her and caught the words, "Mamma, my mamma!" The mother knelt by the little bed and prayed, oh, so earnestly, that God would take care of her child. A deep, heart-rending groan escaped the poor lady, and then her husband came in.

"My wife, are you suffering? What is the matter?" he said.

"Oh, I can't let my child go! I can't, I can't!" she cried.

"Come, dear," he said, lifting her from her knees and leading her to her own room. "You are tired and nervous. You must not worry about Nina. She will be well taken care of. My sister is anxious to have her, and you know your brother has written four or five letters assuring us they will do all in their power to make her contented and happy."

Mrs. Boise went to bed, but the poor woman lay awake nearly all night. Not until toward morning did she get a few hours of fitful sleep.

When she awoke Mr. Boise was up and dressed,

"What time is it?" she asked.

"It's after five, and time to wake Nina," he said; "but had you not better lie still? She can come here and tell you 'good-by,' and I'll see her off."

"Indeed I must at least go to the door with her. Do you think I could lie here when she was leaving?" and with that Mrs. Boise arose and began making a hasty toilet.

"Nina! Nina!" she heard her husband call; "time to get up, daughter. You start this morning with Mrs. Knight. She will be here at six, and you must be ready."

"How did she take it?" asked Mrs. Boise when he returned.

"As a sensible child should," he replied; "did not move a muscle in her face."

"God help us!" sighed Mrs. Boise.

"Now you have begun. My dear wife, do try and control yourself," said her husband.

After Nina had taken in the full meaning of what her father had said, she lay a moment with wide-open, staring eyes. She wanted to scream, but did not. Instead she arose and dressed herself with feverish haste, then rushed to her mother and threw her arms around her. How they clung



NINA'S GRIEF AT THE SEPARATION FROM HER MOTHER.



to each other! Both were afraid this sad embrace might be their last on earth. The dear little head, the mother thought, would never rest upon her bosom again, and this would be the last time forever that she could press these precious lips to her own. She felt that death would no more have power to give her pain after this parting was over; indeed, the parting of soul and body would then be welcome, she thought.

They heard Mr. Boise talking to some men who were taking out Nina's trunk, and presently he brought his daughter's hat and said that the carriage was there. Together mother and child went to the door.

"God bless you, my darling child!" said Mrs. Boise, "and make you his own,—and bring you to me—where parting can not be!"

Nina felt as if her heart would burst. She screamed and held to her mother. "Don't make me go! Don't make me go!" she cried wildly, and almost fell in a convulsion. Her face was black and blue, and the blood ran from her nose.

Her father wiped her face, then with the driver's help took her away by force and carried her to the carriage, saying as he kissed her: "Good-by, daughter; I am sorry to see you act

so. She will soon recover, Mrs. Knight," he said, placing her beside the maid; "and I am sure you will have no further trouble with her. She is usually a good, obedient child."

Mrs. Knight murmured some polite speech, and the carriage drove away to the boat.

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Knight looked more displeased than sorry as her eyes rested on the suffering child opposite her. "Well, if I'd known Captain Knight was getting me into this," she thought, "I should have thought twice before I allowed it." She felt more and more chagrined and put-upon as they got nearer the river and Nina's sobs did not abate.

Miss Emma Knight and the maid seemed much amused at the child's "carrying-on," as they termed it. They commented freely on her appearance, too. Her clothes were not quite so fashionable and "up-to-date" as the Knights'.

When they arrived at the landing, Nina had grown a little calmer, but still sobbed, and her eyes and face were red and swollen. She sat in her corner of the carriage waiting for the others to get out.

"Well, little Miss, aren't you going to get out? or do you think you can just 'carriage-ride' the whole journey?" Mrs. Knight said to her, in no amiable tone of voice.

Nina quietly got out without replying.

"Get the child's wrap. She seems to have lost

what little wits she ever had," Mrs. Knight said crossly to her maid, when she noticed Nina had left her cloak in the seat behind her. Nina tried to thank the maid, but her sobs choked her.

After they got on board the boat, they took Nina into the reception room, and Mrs. Knight told her she had better stay there, as she was "too sorry a looking figure" to be seen with her on deck.

The poor child buried her face in her lap to kill her sobs, and heard Miss Knight say to a friend who had come up to speak to her: "Isn't she a sight! And we've got to be bothered with her all the way through!"

As soon as Nina felt that their attention was diverted from her, she crawled under the steps to hide herself and her sorrow. Later, when breakfast was announced, Mrs. Knight's maid found her there, and told her that her mistress wanted to know "if that child looked fit to be seen at the table yet."

"Tell Mrs. Knight I'm not hungry and don't want any breakfast," said Nina.

While they were all eating she went on deck. She sat by the railing and looked sadly into the water. People who passed noticed her sad little face and heard her deep sobs, but said nothing to

her. Her thoughts were of how perfectly happy she had been only the night before, and of how wretched and alone in the world she felt now. "Oh, how I want my mamma!" she said to herself.

"My little friend, what is the matter? Why are you crying?" said a gentleman, coming up to her and kindly holding out his hand.

"I have lost my precious, precious mother," said Nina, between her sobs.

"How have you lost her?" he asked.

"Oh, sir, she is ill, and has to go to Europe, or she will die, and — and may be she — she will die there. I am so afraid I'll never see her again in this world — but — but in heaven I will, won't I? Oh, if heaven wasn't such a long way off!" sobbed the child.

"You are a little angel. Come, don't cry. I reckon you'll see your mother long before you get to heaven," said the stranger. "What is your name?"

"Nina Boise, sir," she said, looking into his pleasant face.

"Well, Miss Nina, my name is Major Jones. Now, then, we are acquainted, and you can tell me where you are going, and whom you are with, and, oh, everything," he said, trying to divert her mind from the sorrow that absorbed it. "I am going to Knoxville to live with strangers," she answered. "They are relations, but strangers to me. The people I am with are strangers, too, and I'm a—a bother to them. How I wish I wasn't here! The young lady said I was a sight. She said my clothes were old-fashioned, and—and that I looked like Samantha. I do not know her at all. Do you, Major Jones?"

"Never mind; it doesn't matter what people say; just forget it all; and you need not bother them any more. There is a charming young lady, a friend of mine, on board, who is going nearly as far as you are. I'll ask her to look out for you," said the Major.

"May be she will not want to, so just let me look after myself," said Nina. "I have God for my friend, haven't I? And I know he loves me, and I know he has put this trouble upon me for some wise reason and to make me a good girl. My mamma has often told me how much he loves us all. I am going to try to be good, and then God will let my mamma return to me, won't he, Major Jones?"

"I hope so, my dear, with all my heart," he said. "Now I'll go and hunt up the young lady I spoke of. I'm sure you and she will like each other; you can't help it."

"What a beautiful child!" said the Major to himself as he walked away, much impressed with her sorrow and her faith.

"Miss Alice," he said, when he found that young lady, "there is a little girl on deck, named Nina Boise, whom I want you to meet. She is in the care of strangers, but is practically alone, and is in great distress over being separated from her mother, who, it seems, must go to Europe for her health. A sweeter, more attractive looking little girl you won't often find, and I'll esteem it a favor if you'll make friends with her. She, like you, believes in the sovereignty and love of God," he added. "Will you hunt her up?"

"Certainly," replied Miss Alice; "I'll find her at once. I feel quite complimented to be asked."

With that she went on deck and soon found Nina. She introduced herself kindly, saying that her friend, Major Jones, had sent her. Then this sweet young lady sat down by the sad, grief-stricken little girl, and talked to her the rest of the morning. When dinner-time came she put her arm around Nina, saying, "Come, dear, and go with me to dinner."

"You are so kind to me, Miss Alice," said Nina: "but I don't feel as if I could swallow a bite. You go on and I'll stay here till you come back." "But, my child, you must at least have a cup of tea. I'll bring it to you," said Miss Alice, softly smoothing Nina's hair.

"No, don't, please. I do not want it," Nina said, but her friend was already gone.

A half hour later Mrs. Knight passed to some chairs on the other side of the deck and caught a glimpse of Nina as the child was trying to swallow the tea and eat the tea-cakes Miss Alice had brought her. Major Jones had just bought some fruit and candy for her, and was asking her which she wanted first.

"Well," said Mrs. Knight to her daughter, "that Boise child won't starve, if she does stay away from her meals."

Major Jones and Miss Alice were more and more attracted by Nina, and were very kind and attentive to her. They asked her to go over the boat with them and see the different parts. She went, but could not get interested in anything. She seemed sad and preoccupied, and finally said she would like to go to her state-room and rest.

"Shall I go with you?" asked Miss Alice.

"No, no! You like the lovely breeze, and must not go in on my account," said Nina, and left them.

Toward evening the Major and Miss Alice were

again sauntering around the deck, when they were stopped by Judge Jones, a cousin of the Major's.

"Well, Judge, I'm glad to see you. This is Miss Alice White, Judge Jones," said the Major.

"I'm delighted to meet you, Miss White," said Judge Jones. "Saw you at dinner, but you were only there a few minutes."

"Where have you been all afternoon, Judge?" asked the Major.

"Asleep," said Judge Jones, "but was wakened by hearing the sweetest prayer from a child; I think in the next state-room to mine. She seemed to be praying for her mother, who was sick and away from her. I declare it stirred me to the bottom of my heart."

"Yes, I'll tell you about that child while Miss Alice hunts her up and gets her to eat some supper. She was just starting on that errand when we met you," said Major Jones.

A few minutes later Miss Alice knocked at Nina's door and found the child lying in her berth with traces of tears on her face again.

"Were you asleep, Nina?" she asked. "Come, get ready and go to supper with me. You are going to be a good, sweet little girl, and eat a nice, big supper. I find the other berth in your

state-room is not occupied, and I've made arrangements to stay in here with you to-night, so you won't feel so lonely, little girl."

Nina got up and bathed her face, then went with Miss Alice to the dining-room, more to please her than anything else. She was touched by the sweet young lady's kind solicitude for her.

"Miss Alice, I love you," said Nina; "but I can't eat very much."

"Well, dear, no one can do more than their best," said Miss Alice, handing her a big glass of milk. "There, begin on that."

After supper Nina thought she ought to hunt up the Knights. She had seen nothing of them since morning.

"Oh, Mrs. Knight," she said, when she found her, "I want to thank you for your kindness in taking charge of me. I am sorry I was such a trouble to you. If I can ever do anything for you, I shall be glad to repay you; but if I can't help you in any other way, you — you have my prayers."

"Prayers, nonsense!" Mrs. Knight replied. "I do not care for prayers, and you can not help me in any way. You have been a care and a trouble, but would have been more had not some one felt for me and relieved me, to an extent."

"I am sorry, and I hope you will never be bothered with me again," said Nina.

"Well, you need not worry; I will surely not. My husband is one of the soft, say-nothing kind. He is always being imposed on by his friends, and this time he got me in it. But 'tis bed-time now, and you'd better retire."

Mrs. Knight was the kind of woman — alas! that others should be such — who considered children a nuisance, and never thought it worth while to show them the least consideration or even politeness.

Nina went slowly to her state-room with tears rolling down her cheeks again. "How glad I am," she said to herself, "that Miss Alice is going to stay with me to-night! Oh, dear! only last night I was so happy with my sweet, darling mamma, and now—now I have no mother, no home, and am alone—no, never alone, for mamma said God would always be with me. I wonder if I can remember that song mamma sang, 'Never Alone.'"

Then she hummed softly:

"When in affliction's valley
I'm treading the road of care,
My Savior helps me carry
My cross when heavy to bear.

When my feet are entangled with briers, Ready to cast me down,
My Savior whispers his promise—
'I will never leave thee alone."
No, never alone; no, never alone;
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.
He died for me on the mountain;
For me they pierced his side;
For me he opened that fountain,—
The crimson cleansing tide;
For me he's waiting in glory,
Seated upon his throne;
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone."

When, an hour later, Miss Alice White went into Nina's state-room, the child had fallen asleep. Miss Alice looked earnestly at the trustful, sensitive little face. "The dear," she said; "I hope she will find sympathy and love where she is going. I know one person in Knoxville who will be sweet to her, and I'll write to her to-morrow."

CHAPTER V.

It was late the next afternoon when the stage-coach in which Nina and the Knights were seated approached Knoxville. Nina had bade Miss White and Major Jones an affectionate good-by in the morning, on leaving the boat. The Knights, after once seeing that she was on the stage, paid no more attention to her. The journey had been long and tiresome, and the little girl felt very weary and lonely.

"I hope my new relations will care for me," she thought. "I'll try so hard to be good, and then they will. I'll remember what mamma said about making myself useful, too. I can mend hose and sew on buttons, and do many things to help my Aunt Frances."

Soon she arrived at her uncle's house.

"And this is Nina, is it?"

"Yes, ma'am. Is this my Aunt Frances?" replied Nina, looking into the handsome but hard face of the tall lady who had greeted her. Her heart sank within her, she knew not why.

"Yes, I'm your Aunt Frances, and this is your Uncle Thomas, and this is my daughter Jeannetta,"

she said, as she turned to them. "Come to your room and take off your things, for tea will soon be ready. You must go to the lavatory to wash," she continued, leading the way to Nina's room. "I really did not have room for you, but your father was so anxious for me to take you that I consented. They say your mother will not get well. They fear she will not live to cross the water. Well, you are acting quite silly. I hope you're not a cry-baby. I can't stand that kind of thing around me. Come along now to tea."

"Thank you, Aunt Frances, but I have a headache, and do not want any supper," said Nina.

"Oh, bosh! You must eat whether you want it or not. You have to mind me if you stay in my house, and I suppose I'll have you the rest of my days, or until your father marries again," her aunt said.

They soon sat down to tea, but poor Nina could not swallow a bite. To please her aunt she made a pretense of eating, however, and when tea was over she was allowed to retire.

"So this is my new home," she thought, when she got to her room. "How stiff and cold they all are to me! Oh, I do wish I could see my mamma and be with her! They tell me I'll never see her again! Oh, if I could kiss her 'goodnight,' as I used to such a short time ago! But those happy days are gone, and I can never look in her sweet face again. Why, oh, why didn't my papa let me go? I wonder if my mamma's thinking of me now. Perhaps she is! I must try to go to sleep, so I will say 'good-night' to myself—and—God be with both mamma and me."

She knew no more until a loud rap awakened her the next morning and some one said: "Miss Nina, Miss Frances wants to know if you are going to sleep all day. She says we can't keep breakfast so long."

Nina jumped up from her bed in fright, saying: "I am so sorry."

After dressing herself she hastened down, and was met by her aunt with a frown.

"Nina," she said, "this is against my rules; up at six you must be after this; to bed at eight. I am afraid you are lazy. When you finish your breakfast, come to the library."

"Very well, Aunt Frances," said Nina, as her aunt left the room. She ate a hearty breakfast and went into the library.

"Aunt Frances, I am here. What will you have?"

"I want you to understand my rules, Nina. I have told you the time to get up and when to

retire. Now I want you to clean your room, the three halls, and do the dusting. I am going to dismiss the chambermaid, and you will have to do part of the work."

"Very well, Aunt Frances. Mamma said for me to do all you told me to. I want to be as useful as I can."

"You must put everything in its place; nothing must be amiss," her aunt went on. "You must obey your cousin as well as your uncle and me. When we have company, you must not intrude or be in the way. You know, Nina, it is a bother to have you here at all. You may write to your mother once a month."

"Oh, auntie! mamma said I could write every day to her," exclaimed Nina.

"But you have nothing to do with your mother now. I am 'boss.' Do you understand?"

"Yes, ma'am, I understand; but I do wish you would let me write every week, then. My poor, dear, sick mamma expects to hear from me."

"Writing so often will be a waste of time. She will not live long anyway. Now none of that crying," said her aunt, as Nina's eyes filled with tears. "You, I think, are going to be a great bother. I shall have your uncle put you in a convent, if you don't watch out."

"Miss Frances, a caller, please," announced a servant.

"Very well," she answered, and presently left the library.

"Oh, dear! This is my new home. Well, I am glad she had a caller; wish some one would call on her all the time," Nina said to herself as she went to her task.

By dinner-time she had finished the work her aunt assigned her, and in the afternoon, alone in her room, was thinking of what her aunt had said to her.

"Aunt Frances is not like my dear, precious mamma," she said to herself. "Uncle Thomas is like ice, but she is worse. Such cold people, they seem dreadful to me; but here I am complaining and crying, and mamma told me not to. I am surely going to write to my mother, though, each day, and aunt can't stop me. I will mind her in all things but those I promised mamma. The promises I made her and God, I will keep!" The door opened.

"What is that, little Miss, you are saying you will keep? I heard you, and let me tell you now and for all time, you have me to mind," her aunt said.

"Aunt Frances, I do not wish to give you any

trouble, and let me say that, though I am here against my wishes, I will obey you in all things but this one: I must write to my mother every day. I do not want to be stubborn — I think if — if you knew how much I loved my poor, dear mother, you would not forbid my writing to her."

"Well, you heard me. You must obey me in all things. This afternoon you may have to do as you please, but after this I shall find you something to do." Her aunt closed the door and left Nina once more to herself.

"Oh, fool!" said Nina—"I am sorry I called her a fool, but what is she? She provokes me so. I must be in a hurry and write to mamma. There is my paper just as those dear mother hands fixed it for me. If I could only touch the hem of her dress, I should be so happy! I would never worry her again as long as I lived, if I could just see her and be with her. What a sad world this is, but wouldn't it be a bright one if mamma and I could only be together again! I'm afraid I can't write mamma a very cheerful letter." She wrote:

My dearest, precious Mamma:

I am ever so happy to write to you, and so sad, too. I do wish I could kiss you. I feel as if I would never take my lips away from yours. Oh, dear mamma, everybody is so funny. They are not as I like.

I do not like auntie much, nor cousin, nor uncle much

better. They are as cold as ice with me. They talk to me as if I was a dog. They are going to send my trunk to the attic.

I look at your picture every few minutes, mamma. Aunt is tall, has black eyes and dark hair; she might be pretty if she was good. They do not go to prayer-meeting, though they go to parties often. They do not seem to care about being good at all.

Little cousin has no Bible; she has everything else. I do hope you will soon be well, and we can be at home as we used to. I wish I could hug you, mamma; I do love you so much. Now goodbye, and goodbye, with all my love.

I am your lone, little girl,

NINA BOISE.

"Miss Frances says, 'Come to supper,' Nina; be quick, do not delay," said Hannah, the house-maid.

"Thank you, Hannah," said Nina, "I am ready and will go right down."

"Nina, how have you been spending the afternoon?" said Aunt Frances, when she got to the table.

"Very pleasantly, indeed; I've been writing to my mother."

"Well, Nina, I must see all letters going from this house and all returning."

"Auntie, I sent the letter by the postman just as I came in to supper," said Nina, with a little gasp.
"I did not know that you wished to see it."

"You do not seem to know anything but your-

self and your mother. I am going to have my hands full with you, I see. Well, eat your supper, and then you can go to bed, and remember, up at six in the morning. And, Nina, in speaking to your cousin, please call her 'Cousin Netta.' It is more respectful than simply 'Netta.'"

"Well, it is a scolding, breakfast, dinner and supper," Nina said, when she got to her room. "I wonder how I can stand this life. I suppose, though, it is kind of them to have me here. I do wonder why Netta does not like me, and why they all treat me so. Oh! this is Aunt Jane. I'm glad you came up to stay with me a while; I am so lonely," said Nina, as the kind face of the negro cook appeared at the door. "I have a black Aunt Jane at home," she went on, "and I love you, aunty, if you are black. Aunt Jane, my mamma has gone to Europe to get well, but my Aunt Frances tells me, to die. I told mamma I was afraid I would see no friends when I left her, but she told me the earth was full of angels if I could but see and hear them."

Aunt Jane nodded and Nina went on: "Mamma said the white spire pointing upward, the oak reaching out its branches, the lark battling with the storm that beats her down, are all angels. They teach us to look upward, to think of heaven,

the place of happiness, the home of the good — a world without separation, death or trouble."

"Yes, honey, that is all true. You' mamma mus' a' been a mighty sweet lady. You's a good, kind little thing yo'se'f, an' I want to know if you'll read to me sometimes, nights, when I come up here. 'Cause, honey, I can't read. An' I got a piece a' paper here now I foun' jes' as I come up the street this ev'nin'. You read it, little Miss, and see what it says."

Nina took the slip of paper and read:

"There is no grave on earth's broad chart
But has some bird to cheer it;
So hope sings on in every heart,
Although we may not hear it;
And if to-day the heavy wings
Of sorrow are oppressing,
Perchance to-morrow's sun may bring
The weary heart a blessing."

"Why, that is good, Aunt Jane; it seems as if it was written just for me, doesn't it? You don't know how much better I feel since you came up to see me. Come as often as you can," Nina said, as Aunt Jane rose to go.

'Yes, honey, that I will; I knows my frien's if I is black. Good night, little Miss."

"Poor, kind, old negro—but she seems happy," thought Nina, after she had gone. "Why

do I say 'poor' and pity her? I feel sorry for every one, I suppose, because my own heart is sad and heavy."

"With a yearning sad and deep,
By the fireside, lone and dreary,
I sit me down and weep!
Where is my precious mother's voice,
To whose dear, bird-like tones
Some other ear now listens,
Less anxious than my own.

"Yet, no! despair shall sink me not,
While life and love remain;
Though the weary struggle haunt me,
And my prayer be made in vain;
Though at times my spirit fail me,
And the bitter teardrops fall,
Though my lot be hard and lonely,
Yet l hope and trust through all."

CHAPTER VI.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. St. Clair. I heard you had a little visitor, Miss Nina Boise, who is a friend of a friend of mine, Miss Alice White; I called to see her," said an attractive young lady, who was shown into the parlor one afternoon, where Mrs. St. Clair was entertaining a visitor.

"Well, Miss Kaughman," replied Mrs. St. Clair, "I am sorry indeed, but she is out. She is a great bother, and I send her out as much as possible. She is 'cranky' about religion, just like her mother, who has gone to Europe — to die, I suppose. Her mother is my husband's only sister; we would not have taken her otherwise, for besides being a great care, we are afraid she will get some of her 'cranky' religious notions into our Janetta's head. You know we Knoxville people do not 'go in' much for that kind of thing. I believe in getting all there is in this life out of it and not bothering about the next, don't you?"

"That depends upon what you mean, Mrs. St. Clair," said Miss Kaughman. "Well, I won't keep you standing any longer as Miss Nina is not in. Tell her I am sorry that I missed her, please. Good afternoon."

"Well, I'm glad she has gone. Did you notice, Mrs. Jones, how I whipped her over Nina's shoulders?" said Mrs. St. Clair. "I do not care much for those people who come here from Kentucky, anyway. They are such cranks."

"You are just right; my husband is one of them. He does not care the least bit for any kind of gayety, but I am not going to stay at home because he does," said Mrs. Jones.

"Aunt Frances," said Nina, coming into the room, "Hannah said some one called to see me; I am so glad."

"Called to see you? The idea! Who would call to see you? What a little piece of conceit you are!" said her aunt.

"Well, Aunt Frances, Miss White said she would have a Kentucky friend of hers, who had come here to live, call on me, and I thought she might have come," said Nina, with a disappointed look upon her sad little face.

"I will call you when any one comes to see you," said her aunt, as Nina left the room.

"She is a piece of impertinence, sure!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair. "Nina," she called in a few minutes, "come here a moment; Mrs. Jones, Netta and I are going out driving; not that it is necessary to tell you, but the stockings have to be

darned. They are all in your room, in the top drawer. So you put your time in mending them while we are gone."

"I am glad to have something to do, Aunt Frances, and I like to darn," said Nina. She was soon at her work. "One pair, two pairs, eight pairs to darn; I will get out my darning machine," she thought; "I can mend beautifully with that." In an hour or so she had all eight pairs made as good as new. Then she went down on the balcony and found that her Uncle Thomas had come home.

"Are you lonely, little girl?" said he, in a kinder tone than he had ever spoken to her.

"Yes, Uncle Thomas. Auntie, her friend, and Netta have gone driving," said Nina; "I have finished my afternoon's work," she continued, "and am wishing for something else to do."

"How would you like to take a car ride? Get on the car here and go to the end of the route and back," he said, handing her a dime. "Don't you think that would be pleasant?"

"Yes, that would be lovely! Thank you kindly, Uncle Thomas," she said.

Her uncle helped her on the car, and Nina was soon enjoying the cool breezes made by the motion of the car as it swiftly passed by trees and houses. After a while she came to a park. The conductor

called its name. It looked so pretty and so different from the parks she had seen, and was altogether so inviting, that she got off the car and walked in. She wandered around for a while and finally sat down beneath the branches of a spreading Southern oak. She began to think of the happy days she had spent in the parks at home with her dear mother. There was not a sound to be heard. All was sweet, peaceful, restful. She began to sing in a low voice one of her mother's hymns. The large oak made her think of it.

"Crush not a wounded spirit,
Nor trample in the dust
The heart that would look up to thee
With hopefulness and trust;
But be thou like the noble oak,
To which the ivy clings,
And shelter the poor stricken soul
Beneath love's ample wings.

"This loity oak, beneath whose shade
We've played upon the lawn,
Though now the monarch of the woods,
Was of an acorn born;
And little seeds of kindness which
May in the heart be sown,
Shall raise up branches by which we
May reach our Father's throne."

It happened that Miss Kaughman and her mother were strolling through the park and heard the sweet voice of the sad little singer. They stood listening quietly a few moments and heard Nina sob. Then they stepped up to her, and Miss Kaughman said: "What is the matter, my dear?"

Her kind tone went straight to Nina's heart and brought the tears again. She covered her face with her hands, but they were gently drawn away. Sitting down beside Nina and taking the slight form in her arms, Miss Kaughman said: "My darling, do not cry; what troubles you so? and who are you?"

Nina tried to smile through her tears. "I am Nina Boise," she said; "I have come here to live with my aunt, Mrs. St. Clair. My poor, dear mother has gone so far away"—again she sobbed bitterly—"to get well, and I think I shall die if I do not go to her. My mamma told me to be good and God would make her well, and send her back to me; but my aunt says she will die! Do you believe God would take her from me?"

"No, my dear; God, I hope, will send her back to you well; and you will see many happy days yet — if you trust him," said Miss Kaughman, trying to comfort her.

"Trust him! I do trust him," said Nina, wiping her eyes, and feeling better for the kind, encouraging words of her new friend. She was greatly pleased when she learned that this sweet lady was Miss Kaughman, but her face fell as she said: "If I could only see you sometimes, but my aunt doesn't want me to have company at all."

"Well, I am sorry, my dear, for I had hoped to see a great deal of you," said Miss Kaughman; but, Nina, just keep trusting in God, and when you feel sad and lonely remember who said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'—and, dear, you have enough to do to keep you busy, enough to keep your heart and mind so occupied that you will not have time to get lonely."

"Keep me busy?" said Nina; "I do all I have to do, and am not busy at all."

"No; you have a great mission in your uncle's family. You might be the means of converting them all into earnest Christian people," said Miss Kaughman.

"Oh, I could never do that," said Nina; "my aunt would be furious if I ever tried."

Then Miss Kaughman talked to her about loving one's enemies, praying for them, and trying to make friends of them. She tried to show Nina how, with God's help, she might reach the hearts and then the souls of the people with whom her lot was cast.

Presently the child got up in alarm. "Oh,"

she said, "I have overstayed my time,— what will aunt say? I am afraid she will be put out with me. I have been so happy listening to you that the time slipped by before I knew it. I hope to meet you again soon. Goodbye."

"Poor child," they both said, after Nina was gone.

"Yes, I am sorry for her," said Miss Kaughman. "I am afraid she will drink from sorrow's side of life's cup."

When Nina reached home her aunt was waiting for her in anything but a pleasant frame of mind.

"Well!" she said, "you left when I told you that those stockings were to be mended. How dare you do so, Nina?"

"Aunt Frances, I mended the stockings, and then uncle told me I could take a car ride," Nina replied.

"It took you a long time to take a car ride," said her aunt.

"Well, I met Miss Kaughman and her mother. I forgot myself and stayed longer than I meant to. If you will overlook it this time, I will try and not let it happen again," said Nina.

"Very well, it's all over now," her aunt said;
"I shall punish you in one way only: A letter from your mother has come, but you will not get

it until in the morning, and may be not then — just as I see proper. I shall teach you that hereafter when I tell you a thing, you shall heed it. Just stop that crying; you are wasting your tears for nothing."

Nina went slowly to her room, her head bent in woe. She cried until tears would no longer come, then only moans could relieve her suffering.

There was a low rap at the door.

"Come," said Nina, in a soft voice.

The door opened, and dear, old, black Aunt Jane stepped in.

"My chile, what troubl' you so?" she said.

"I went out for a car ride and met some sweet people. I overstayed my time, and Aunt Frances is so mad at me that she will not let me have a letter that came for me from my poor, precious mother. Just think how long I have been here, and this is the first word from mamma. I would just give all I have on earth to see it. Oh, why is my lot so hard? Oh, I am so sorry I went; but it is too late now to think about it."

"Well, Nina, I jist bin a-settin' here a-steddyin' bout it, an', see here, I'll tell you: You jis' hush up your cryin' an' I'll go down into the library an' see if I can't fin' it, an' I'll bring it to you, honey," said Aunt Jane.

"Oh, no, Aunt Jane! You see that would be wrong," said Nina.

"Wrong! dog's foot, I don' see one thing wrong 'bout that!" exclaimed Aunt Jane.

"Yes, Aunt Jane, it would be stealing."

"Stealin'!" said Aunt Jane, in a very decided tone of voice; "who ever heard of stealin' from yo'se'f. You'll have to git over all them kin' of fool notions, if you live here."

"Yes, but, auntie," said Nina, "God will not love us if we do things that are not right. You know Aunt Frances has forbid me to take it, and it would be stealing."

"Yes, I knows all that," said Aunt Jane, "but that letter is yo's, an' it would not be stealin'. Anyhow, you know the Bible says plainly, 'Every tub stan's on its own bottom,' an' if I gits that letter an' brings it to you, you jis' take it, an' say nothin', an' I'll be the tub."

"Aunt Jane, I didn't know the Bible said that. Does it?"

"Law sakes me, chile, mine does," and without another word Aunt Jane was gone.

She soon returned with the letter. Nina's eyes flashed with joy. She took it, saying: "I feel as

if I am stealing, but. look here, it says 'Immediate'— Dear mamma!" she said, kissing it.

Mrs. St. Clair opened the door and walked in.

"Oh, yes, little Miss, I have caught you in the act. You shall not put my negroes up to do what is not right. You are what I call an 'imp of Satan,' you headstrong thing! I have a notion to send you right into the street and never let you enter my house again. Stop your bawling this moment; you hear! Aunt Jane, you go to your room, and never let me catch you here again."

"All right, Missus," said Aunt Jane; "but I didn't aim fer you to ketch me this time."

"Now, you come here to me," Mrs. St. Clair said, turning to Nina. She took Nina's letter from her and tore it into small bits.

"Now, you see what you have gained by stealing," she said; "you shall not write another word to your mother nor have a line from her!"

Nina looked at her a moment, grew white, then red, and fell upon her face in a convulsion. The blood streamed from her eyes and nose. The old black auntie who had been watching through the key-hole rushed across the street and called a doctor, who came right over.

Dr. Litten — for that was his name — was met by Nina's uncle and aunt, who told him that Nina had one of her bad spells. "She is crazy at times," her aunt said, "and thinks all kinds of things."

The doctor soon found that the child was in a convulsion. He worked with her nearly all night, but she got no better. Her only words were "Mamma, or, mamma! come to me!"

"Mrs. St. Clair," said the doctor, "I am afraid this child will die; I can do nothing for her, it seems. What caused this spell?"

"I do not know," she answered. "Just as I heard the clock strike eleven, I thought I would slip on my dressing-gown and go up to see how she was resting. I had hardly got here when her screams awakened the household and I sent for you."

"Well," said the doctor, "I am going home for a short time, but will be back presently."

"Wife, there is a mystery in our neighbor's house. That child is in a hard fit—seems as if it is from fright. I am almost afraid I can not restore her," said the doctor, when he got home.

"Well, doctor, the negro woman that came for you told our girl shocking stories. I am horrified — yes, grief-stricken. I am too nervous to tell you now, but you must do all you can for her. I am going to send for Miss Kaughman, and she and I will go over and see if we can do anything."

"I do not believe they will let you," said the doctor. "I thought they were not going to allow me to see her last night. They all seemed much excited. She is a beautiful child, with large blue eyes and golden hair. I'll go out to the kitchen and hear what Eliza has to say."

He soon returned, and his face was white with anger. He took his hat and went across the street to the St. Clairs again.

At noon he came home, saying that Nina was not much better, and that he had summoned a nurse, to whom he had given full directions. The nurse knew a little herself, he said, about what had been going on, and Nina would be carefully watched.

"I am going to call in two other physicians, and we shall leave nothing undone. The case interests me, and besides, I've taken a great liking to the child — Can't imagine how any one could scare her so — 'twas a cruel, heartless performance,' he said, with a stern look on his face.

In the course of a few days Nina got much better, but was left in a weak, nervous condition, and the doctor told Mrs. St. Clair that she had had a shock her nervous system would be long in getting over. He insisted that she needed pleasant

company, and should be allowed to visit his wife and Miss Mary Kaughman.

Nina had seen much of them both while she was ill, and her heart went out to them.

They had grown very fond of Nina.

CHAPTER VII.

"My dearest friend from earth has gone,
Her cheerful voice I hear no more;
Nor will she e'er again return
To Time's dark, wild, sea-beaten shore."

"I am sad to-day, Mrs. Litten, and I thought, as aunt and cousin were out, I would come over and stay with you a while," said Nina, as she sat down in Mrs. Litten's cozy little sitting-room.

"You are always welcome, my dear. What makes you feel badly?" said Mrs. Litten, kindly.

"Oh, I am much better, but I feel as if life is not worth living!" Nina said, with a sigh. "I was glad you and Miss Kaughman came to see me last night — Miss Kaughman has helped me so much. I am going to spend the day with her to-morrow. It will be my birthday, the first one I have ever spent away from my precious mother. I know she will think of me to-morrow — how I wish I could put her in my arms and never let her go! And to think I have never had a letter from her — it almost kills me! Why, oh, why was I taken away from her? Oh, I can't stand it," sobbed Nina, bursting into a fit of hysterical weeping.

"My dear, my dear, do not go on so," said

Mrs. Litten, going over to her and trying to comfort her.

"You will never know how I feel; I can never tell you; I am sick for mamma! — Mamma, why don't you come," she moaned.

"Nina dear, of course no one can take your mother's place," said Mrs. Litten; "but you have become very dear to us, and for our sakes, as well as your own, you must try to"—

Just then Miss Kaughman came in. The sweet smile that usually brightened her face was all gone, and her eyes were red and swollen.

"Oh, Miss Kaughman! what is the matter?" exclaimed Nina; "I never saw you look so in all my life."

Miss Kaughman went close to Nina, and in her sweet, kind way, took Nina's hand in hers.

"My own darling," she said, "I am your friend, as you well know, and I am more pained than you can know to tell you what I must tell you now. The time has come when you must place yourself upon the altar. Ask God to be with you, my child. I can not comfort you; I can only break the sad, sad news. God has taken away your mother, Nina."

"Oh, Miss Kaughman, you do not mean to tell me mamma is dead! Oh, no, no! I can not — I

will not believe it,— taken from me and let to die! die! I must die, too. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

Miss Kaughman and Mrs. Litten thought she had fainted. They laid her on the sofa and called the doctor. Nina's sense soon came back, but she seemed like a person stunned by a heavy blow. A kind of stupor hung over her for days. She did not cry, but talked unceasingly about her mother, showing that her mind was constantly on her loss. She seemed oblivious to what went on around her, like one in a trance, and whenever she could, held tight to Miss Kaughman, seeming to want to be always near her.

"Nina, you must 'look up,' and remember your mother's request," said Miss Kaughman. "You said she told you to always trust in God, and, if you do, dear, you will find that all will come out right in the end."

"Miss Kaughman, you told me to trust God, and mamma told me to trust in him, and he would bring me out of all my trouble. I tried to trust him. How has he brought me out? Mamma, oh, mamma! Am I without a mother? Can it be? And I never wrote but one letter to my poor, dear mother. God have mercy! What shall I do? My blessed Savior, help me!"

"Nina, he will help you," said Miss Kaughman. "You have a refuge, even God. Let me talk to you, dear. We do not always feel the need of help beyond and above ourselves. Difficulties often arise which our own wisdom can solve; fears sometimes disturb us, which a cheerful voice can dissipate; trials occur which human sympathy can lighten. But there are emergencies which drive us home to God. We need, then, to grasp an arm that is not made of flesh. We must open our minds to a mind that is not human. We must ascend to a higher level than the plain of earth. We must find our way to Almighty God and hear from his lips the words, 'This is the way; walk ye in it.' 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,' and, dear heart, it is the fire that purifieth. You say you did trust God, and now this blow has come upon you. Perhaps all is confusion, and you can not understand it. What you should do, dear child, is to keep on trusting and pray for a faith that will light up the darkness of earth with the glory of heaven. God will hear your cry. He will come with his healing powers. He will lead you into the paths of peace and to a larger faith that will be sweet to your soul. Yes, in calamities like this that has come upon you, Nina, there is only one effectual refuge - God himself.

"We meet with many disappointments and losses which our own energy can redress or repair; often when we strike the earth, we rebound by our own elastic force, only to stand firmer than before. But there are trials in which our natural strength fails us. Time can never heal them and no human power can take them away. They make the world another place, different from what it was before. In our most cheerful hours, there is one chord in the secret heart that vibrates mournfully. When the landscape looks fairest and nature keeps her merriest holiday, there is one small, green mound more precious than all the world beside. It seems strange that earth should contrive to bring forth her flowers. The moaning winds of autumn suit us better than the lively carols of spring. There are memories of which we can not speak, because words can not utter them. There are precious tones, perhaps forgotten long ago by all the rest of the world, which come to us in the stillness of the night, and fill the air with mournful melody. Up to the hour when this dreadful sorrow fell upon us, the resources of earth and our own energy sufficed for every emergency. But under this blow the soul is broken. Nature gives way. There is no shelter on earth from the storm, and in our

desolation we look up to God and say: 'In the shadow of thy wing will I make my refuge until this calamity be overpast.' The calamity is not overpast, but we find strength to bear it. The fountain of sorrow is not dried, and we have no wish for it to be, for we receive blessings from its bitter waters. Our trial has bound us closer to God; we have him for our portion whatever else be wanting. The world hangs more loosely; it is bereft of many of its charms; it has ceased to stir our ambitions, and its pleasures have lost their old attractiveness. But there are bonds of sympathy that connect us with other worlds which are more abiding. Truth has become real which had no such reality before. We have seen the face of Christ and have heard his gracious words. We now know the purpose of his mediation, for we have experienced its necessity. Our religion is now a life and not a dogma; a substance and not a shadow; something we can stay ourselves by in any extremity. Death is disrobed of haif its terrors, for we have seen a loved one go across the 'dark valley.'

"Have faith in God, Nina dear; put your whole trust in him, and you will see through the darkness of your affliction—see the gleaming of a

bright star above. You will have a new 'song in the night' that will fill your soul with happiness. The one deep sorrow that you have experienced will be lightened and relieved, and you will say from your heart, 'Thy will, not mine, be done.'"

CHAPTER VIII.

"A sad Christmas for me,—how strange it seems to be in a strange home without my mother—but how sweet it was of Miss Kaughman to ask me here for my holidays," thought Nina, on being awakened by the merry Christmas bells pealing forth their joyous chimes. She wondered if it was time to get up, but saw that Miss Kaughman was still in bed beside her. Just then Mrs. Kaughman came into the room with a basket of gifts, exclaiming: "A merry Christmas to you both, my dears!"

"Merry Christmas," they replied merrily, but Nina suddenly thought that her own dear mother could never greet her with a happy smile and sweet gifts again on Christmas morning. She fell back very white, moaning: "Oh, on last Christmas I was with mamma, and now I have no mother. I think every day makes it harder for me to stand my sorrow. Oh, I can not bear it! What am I to do?"

Miss Kaughman could only shed tears with her this time; she was too full to even reply.

Soon breakfast was announced. They went (5)

down, but Nina could eat very little, though she tried hard to be as cheerful as she could, for she saw how her sorrow caused her friends to grieve, and thought she ought not to make their Christmas unpleasant, when they had so kindly invited her to spend it with them and had given her so many nice tokens of their friendship. She went to her room after breakfast, and asked God to help her bear her trials herself, and not let her worry others with them.

When she came down she looked more cheerful. Her eyes, that had always seemed so sad and full of tears, were bright. She was dressed in a pretty red gown that her mother had made for her, and her face was beautiful and fair; she looked as if the burdens of life had been removed.

Mrs. Kaughman presented their friend, Mr. Everton, to her. He stepped forward, saying: "Miss Boise, I have heard so much about you, that I feel as if I know you very well, and must shake hands with you."

Nina extended her hand and looked into his kind face with a sad little smile. She liked this young man's looks at once. After exchanging the compliments of the day, the talk turned to what they had been doing on Christmas days of previous years, and Mrs. Kaughman said that Nina, being

so young, could not remember as many as the rest of them.

"I am twelve years old, Mrs. Kaughman," said Nina, "and it has been two years to-day since I was baptized. I remember how beautiful my mother looked that day; how pale she was, too. I did not think then that she would only be on earth with me one more Christmas."

A delicate flush like the pink of an apple blossom overspread her cheeks, her eyes filled with burning tears. She bowed her head in her hands and groaned: "I little thought—then—of this cruel blow that—that was to come upon me. I loved on, trusted on, hoped on "—

"My dear Nina," said Mrs. Kaughman, "we do not understand why this trial was put upon you — you so young and tender. It's one of God's mysteries. But all things are done for a purpose. You may not see it now, but in after years you will. How many mysteries are ever around us! The mysteries of life may be likened to a river, whose head, being far in the land, is, at first rising, little, easily viewed; as you go farther, it gapeth like a wider bank, not without pleasant and delightful windings, while both sides are set with trees and beautiful flowers still easily seen and appreciated. But the farther you go to follow it, the deeper

and broader is the river, and the farther away are its banks, till at last it inweaves itself with the unfathomed ocean; there you can see more water, but no shore—no end to that liquid, fluid vastness.

"In many things we may sound nature, in the shallows of her revelations we may trace her to her second cause; but beyond that, we meet with nothing but the puzzle of the soul, the dazzle of the mind's dim eye. When we come to unrevealed Divinity, we are in a sea. The only way to gain comfort that will last, is to trust Jesus." As Mrs. Kaughman said this she wiped her eyes and held Nina close in her arms.

"I ought not to give way," sobbed Nina, "for I am grieving others who are so kind and good to me." She looked up at Mrs. Kaughman and tried to smile, but the pathetic, little tear-stained face smote every heart.

Mr. Everton proposed that she take a walk with him to the post-office.

"Yes, go. The fresh air will do you good, dear," said Miss Kaughman, proceeding to get the child's wraps and put them on her. Then Nina and her new friend were soon out in the crisp, fresh air and bright sunshine.

Mr. Arthur Everton was a young man of sense

and ability. He had expressive gray eyes, a large, commanding figure and light hair. His ways were the ways of kindness, and he was a high-minded Christian gentleman — a man Kentucky was proud to own as her own. He had been born and bred in that State, although his home was now in Ohio.

Besides being a distant relative, Arthur Everton was an old and dear friend of the Kaughmans, and since their stay in Knoxville had always come to spend Christmas with them.

He, too, had lost a mother whom he loved dearly, and well knew how to sympathize with Nina in her loss. He had never forgotten his mother, and took much comfort in doing things that would have pleased her. He had kept her church subscription paid up, and continued to give liberally to every charity she had been interested in. His mother had been dead several years, but as Mr. Everton took Nina's hand in his, vividly he remembered his own terrible sorrow, and he felt in his heart for the poor stricken child more than his tongue could express. The two seemed to understand each other at once, and soon became fast friends. All through the holidays he tried to make sunshine for her, and seemed pleased indeed when he succeeded in bringing a smile to her sad little face.

The Kaughmans, too, grew more and more fond of Nina, and this sympathy and love was like balm to her wounded heart. The child dreaded going back to her aunt's home, and the day before she left, told Mrs. Kaughman it was so hard to do right and to feel right toward her relatives —" and I can not even think now," she added, piteously, "that some day mamma will come back to me!"

"Try to always think of your mother, Nina, as in a happy home, where she has gone to await your coming — and it won't be long. The longest life here, child, is very short when compared with the time we shall spend there! Try to be cheerful and bright and take pleasure in all things around you. When we rebel, we hurt God our Father, who surely knows what is best for us," Miss Kaughman said.

"Dear Miss Kaughman, you have all been so good to me, and I've been such a trouble to you," said Nina. "I want to hide my sorrow, but, oh, I can't — it won't stay hid."

"Don't try, dear," said her friend; "it's much better to share it with those who love and sympathize with you."

"Ah," she continued, turning toward her mother, "as the dove will clasp its wings to its side to conceal the arrow that is preying on its vitals, so it is the nature, not of child, but of woman, to hide her sorrows from the world. That is the way many bright eyes grow dim, many soft cheeks grow pale, many lovely forms fade away, and none can tell the cause that blighted their loveliness."

"Coleridge says," she went on, "'A woman's head is usually over ears in her heart. Man seems to have been designed for the superior being of the two; but I think women are generally better creatures of the two. They have, taken universally, weaker appetites and weaker intellects, but they have much stronger affections. A man with a strong heart has sometimes been saved by a strong head; but a corrupt woman is lost forever.' And again: 'The man's courage is loved by the woman, whose fortitude is coveted by the man.'

"Perhaps man was 'designed for the superior being,' but the time is coming when it will not be considered indelicate and unpardonable for woman to speak and write of 'herself and her inner life' — to let it be known 'that she has a soul and a heart wherein human joys and sorrows, in their height and depth, find a home.' Let woman write freely and talk freely of her griefs, her joys, her sorrows and her loves; let her not be compelled to blush for the holiest part of her nature; let her

not decry the possession of the noblest gifts she has received from heaven, and she will be contented in the sphere for which she was created, willingly leaving man to reign supreme in his own.

"Woman is like some tender tree, the pride and beauty of the grove; graceful in its form, bright in its foliage, when oftentimes the worm is preying at its heart. We find it suddenly withering when it should be most fresh and luxuriant. We see it drooping its branches to earth and shedding leaf by leaf, until, wasted away and perishing, it falls in the stillness of the forest, and, as we muse over the beautiful ruin, we strive in vain to recollect the blast that could have smitten it.

"It is better, far better, for woman not to hide and nurse her grief, but to take comfort and gain strength of heart from those around. Trials should make her strong, not fell her to earth."

Nina did not wholly understand all Miss Kaughman had been saying, but she put her arms around her neck and said: "Oh, if I could only be as good as you are, everything would look beautiful and I should be happy! I should like to lie down for a while; may I? I have a headache."

"Yes, dear," said Miss Kaughman, "that is the best thing you can do. You will feel fresh and good then, and after tea, we will all take a long walk or a ride."

"That will be delightful," Nina said, as she stepped out of the room in a light, fairy-like way.

"Mary," said Mrs. Kaughman, "I feel very sorry for that poor child. She seems to dread returning to her aunt's, and one can not blame her — they seem to have no affection or sympathy for her there. I am afraid, though, that you talk 'too old' for her."

"Well, mother, she is by no means an ordinary child, and it seems to me that as soon as our loved ones can understand we should talk with them as plainly as we can about the real and true things that will lead them to the full enjoyment of their best gifts and prepare them for useful, happy lives. And don't you think it is better to go a little beyond a child's understanding, giving her something to 'think out,' than to fall beneath it?"

"But Nina is young, and so innocent," said Mrs. Kaughman.

"Yes, mother, she is innocent and very childlike in some ways; but she is so sensitive and has suffered so much that she has an insight and sympathy in matters of the heart beyond her years.

"There is no study, mother, half so delightful to me as that of young creatures, with hearts fresh from the gardens of the skies. They are indeed a mystery — a fragrant, luminous, beautiful mystery. They are the 'cryptogamia' of another world, the 'infusoria' of the skies."

The next day, when the time of parting came, Miss Kaughman and Mr. Everton accompanied Nina to the carriage, and as the latter reached out his hand to bid her "Good-bye," a small box fell in her lap. On opening it, she found a beautiful little ring set with a diamond and a ruby. She was delighted with it. When she got home, however, her Aunt Frances sent it back to him, saying that Nina was a child.

He understood, and after a short time sent her a little friendship ring enclosed in a letter to Miss Kaughman. Nina asked Miss Kaughman to keep the ring for her until she was "a big lady."

The open-hearted, guileless child, capable of such lasting and devoted affections as Nina had for her mother, had impressed Mr. Everton deeply.

"A sweet little girl
Held all his heart-strings in her hand;
His hopes, and power, and majesty were hers,
And not his own."

CHAPTER IX.

Nina's stay at Bleakhouse, as her aunt's home was called, had only been of a few months' duration, but the servants had all learned to love her dearly. She could not see why, when they loved her so, those that should did not.

Not long after her return from the Kaughmans there was a light knock at her door, and William, the furnace-man, a bright mulatto about eighteen, opened the door, saying: "Miss Nina, pa'don me, but I'm going away an' wanted to say 'good-bye.' They say us negroes has got too 'tached to you, an' they's goin' to let us go, one by one. I's the first they let go, 'cause they got a man in my place. Oh! my poor little Missie, I's so sorry for you, 'cause I know you ain't happy. You is so pale. I wish I could do somethin' for you, but this nigger can't do nothin', seems like. So good-bye, if we never meet again. I hope we will meet where there is no partin' an' all will be bright, an' us niggers will all be white."

"Well, William, you be a good boy, and always do right, then your soul will be white, I know."

"Oh! say! say, Missie, don't you think my face will, too?"

"I do not know, William, but you be good and all will be right. Good-bye," Nina said.

"I'll try, little Miss," he said. "Goodbye."

Just then Mrs. St. Clair appeared on the scene and said: "You, Nina, are the cause of all the servants having to go. See what trouble you make me. I have just told your uncle that he had to put you in school somewhere. There is a school we have heard of, on the order of a reform school, for bad, disobedient people, and that is where you will land, I think. We got a letter from your father not long ago. He will not return for five years, and, may be, never."

- "Why didn't he write to me, auntie?"
- "Because I acquainted him with your disobedience, see!"
 - "What have I done, Aunt Frances?"
 - "You know very well, and needn't ask me."
- "I do not know of anything, except that I cried," said Nina, "and I hope your little girl will never have to part with you, and then fall in such"—
 - "What did you say?" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair.
 - "Fall where she was not wanted," said Nina.
- "Well, who could want such a thing as you, pray?" was her aunt's ungracious reply.

CHAPTER X.

"We walked along, while bright and red
Uprose the morning sun;
And Mathew stopped,—he looked and said,
'The will of God be done.'"

"Tents, Aunt Jane," said Nina, as they met near an open field not far from home. "Whose are they? do you know?"

"Yes, chile, gypsies. They are fortune-tellers. I's done been an' had my fortune tole. They say I's gwine to git money; but now, chile, I's jist gwine to tell you. I's a-gwine to git it when I work for it, an' not till then."

"I wish I could have my fortune told," said Nina; "but I'm going down to see poor little Cleo this afternoon. She is sick, and I'm going to take her something nice to eat."

"You is jis' a little saint," said Aunt Jane.

"No! no, auntie, I think we are all here for something, and I want to find out what I am here for and then do it. Little Cleo is such a sweet child. We are in the same Sunday-school class, and she is a true little Christian. Miss Kaughman says she is going to die. Aunt Jane, I am going to tell you something—I am going to send some

word to mamma by little Cleo. I will not tell her any of my trouble, for it would worry her; but I'll send her word I want to go to heaven, too, and never part from her."

Nina picked up her hat, which had fallen to the ground. Her mother had bought it for her to wear when the spring winds began to blow. As she put it on her pretty head, Aunt Jane thought she had never seen anything so beautiful as her "dear little Missie." With a shake of her face that threw her lovely curls from her face, Nina said: "I am gone, Aunt Jane, but will be back by the time auntie and cousin return from Mrs. Cox's. Good-bye, dear old auntie, until I return," she added, as she saw how the dear old black face shone with love and admiration.

Nina presently came in sight of Mrs. Graves' cottage, and soon found herself swinging open the wicket gate. She entered a large, airy sittingroom, with a bright rag carpet on the floor. There were an old-fashioned piano and some hair-cloth furniture in the room. All looked as if it had seen better days, but was neat as a pin.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Graves," said Nina; "aren't you little Cleo's mother?"

"Yes, little Miss," she answered, pleasantly, but who are you?"

"I am Nina Boise. I live with my aunt, Mrs. St. Clair."

"Yes! yes! I have heard Cleo speak of you. You are the little girl that put the Bible on the Christmas tree for her. She has talked so much about you."

"Didn't she tell you I had no mother? God took my dear mother away from me. I suppose I am very selfish, for my poor mamma was sick when she was on earth, and now she is well and happy; but I do want to see her, oh, so much!"

"Just come in here," said Mrs. Graves, as she led her into the next room. "Cleo is in here. Cleo! Cleo, dear, here is little Nina come to see you."

"Oh, Nina! I am so glad you have come," said Cleo, in a weak voice,—"I am going to heaven, Nina, where your mamma has gone."

The sick child raised herself on her elbow and pointed her little finger to the sky. The glow of evening, shining through a window, lit up her golden hair and flushed cheek with a kind of heavenly light. Cleo's little hands had grown very thin, and her skin was almost transparent. Her breath was quick and short.

"Nina," she said, "I saw heaven in my sleep,—and, oh! how bright and beautiful it looked! The

streets were gold,—the gates were set with pearls—and diamonds—and precious stones. It was all so bright—it hurt my eyes when I looked. The angels, all in pure white, had harps in their hands making lovely music. And, Nina,—I want to meet you there. Shall I?"

"You will meet me there some day," said Nina. "And, Cleo, I want you to tell my mamma about me. Tell her I shall follow her to that beautiful land. But I am not as good as you are, Cleo. Please pray for me, dear Cleo. Now," she said, going close to her, "I must go. Then stooping down to the bed, Nina kissed her "Good-bye," and as she went away she thought: "It may be the last 'Good-bye' on earth, poor little Cleo!—No, poor me!"

"Where have you been?" said Mrs. St. Clair, on meeting Nina, as she returned to the house.

"Well, Aunt Frances, you said I could entertain myself in some way or go unentertained, so I went down to see little Cleo Graves. She is—dying." .

"Nonsense, don't come at me with your ghost stories," said her aunt; "I am tired of all such and wish you were in the land of witches. You would be satisfied then, I suppose. You were bad enough when you first came here, but since you have been

running with that Miss Kaughman, another Kentucky crank, you've got worse and worse."

"Aunt Frances, Miss Kaughman has been my best friend. She was my all in all in my hour of trouble, and she is a sweet Christian lady. She goes to church to learn how to be good, and is good. You go, you say, on account of the preacher, and after he is gone, you say you won't go any more. Do you think there is much Christianity about that?"

"Ah, you are getting quite brave to criticise me! Remember, I am not so far away from Kentucky that I do not know for what her people are noted. I have not heard of their *religion*— only of their fast horses and whisky!"

"And, aunt, their hospitality — don't forget that."

"Well, you will not have much time to visit around, as we have found a place at last, and have decided to send you away," said Mrs. St. Clair.

"Away? Where to?" asked Nina.

"What is it to you? You'll know when you get there," replied her aunt.

"Well, can I go down to-morrow to see little Cleo? — she won't live very long," said Nina.

"Yes, go if you want to. I don't care," said her aunt, turning crossly away. Nina, glad to be left alone, thought to herself: "She is a queer woman, and never has any trouble. Why is it? It seems as if those who try hardest to do right have the most!"

As the next day's sun was sinking, Nina finished her work, and went again to see how Cleo was. On arriving, she saw a wreath of white Easter lilies hanging on the door. The pictures were turned to the wall. All was hushed and muffled inside; and there upon her little cot lay the angel-like form of poor Cleo, sleeping never to wake. She was robed in a pretty white dress she had worn the summer before, and as Nina looked upon her face, so sweet and fair, she thought: "She has gone from this world of trouble and care to take up her heavenly crown and play on a golden harp like those she saw in her dream. But she can not speak to me. Oh, I wish she could! I will go and speak to her mother. Cleo was her all, they say. Her husband has been dead some time, and now her sweet child is taken. Why, I wonder, didn't God take me instead of her!"

When Nina got home, she found her aunt and cousin had not returned. So she thought she would have time to run down to the greenhouse and see about some flowers for Cleo, before tea.

"Good afternoon, Mr. James; I want some



ON A FLOWER MISSION.



flowers for little Cleo Graves' funeral," she said, on finding the proprietor of the greenhouse.

- "Oh! is she dead?" he exclaimed.
- "Yes, she is gone," said Nina.
- "Yes, 'gone home,' and not dead," said Mr. James. "It was she who brought me to the Cross—she told me of the blessed Savior. She was a good little girl,—and now she's gone!" he added in a low, sad tone.
- "I want cape-jessamines and white lilies, Mr. James," said Nina. "They are pure and beautiful, as she was."
- "Very well," said Mr. James, "and I shall send 'The Gates Ajar' in white flowers. They will signify that she waits at heaven's gates until those she led to Christ get home. I know of others she has pointed to the right, and for each there will be a brilliant star in her shining crown."
- "Will you send my flowers in the morning?" said Nina, as she turned to go.
 - "I will, with pleasure," he said. "Good-bye."
- "There is another of God's children," thought Mr. James; "I wonder who she is. She seems to know me. Her face is not so happy as poor little Cleo's was."

The next day Cleo's body was laid to rest in the Rosehill burying-ground, beside her father's.

Nina Boise was not at the funeral.

"A child stolen!" was the news that went out over all Knoxville the following morning. Everywhere could be seen large posters, which read as follows:

REWARD! REWARD!

A CHILD LOST. - NINA BOISE,

The twelve-year-old daughter of Thomas St. Clair, has mysteriously disappeared. Any person who finds her, or gives information as to where she may be found, will be liberally rewarded.

Excitement reigned. Detectives were sent out in all directions.

The gypsies, who had been camping in the vicinity, were gone,—had left in the night. Detectives followed them, but could find no clue in regard to the disappearance of Nina Boise. It was a dark mystery.

Sad and heavy grew the hearts of all Nina's friends when, after days of search, no trace of her could be found.

"I seen Missus a-packin' up Miss Nina's clo's, yestidy," Aunt Jane had said. But Mrs. St. Clair said Nina's things were all there, and this seemed to be true.

CHAPTER XI.

The golden sun was dipping behind the Western hills, and amid purple, fleecy, feathery clouds, seemed sinking to repose, like some proud monarch gracefully reclining on his gorgeous couch to rest. His yellow beams still gilded the tree-tops and tinted with saffron hue the magnificent prospect and romantic region of M——.

It was a mild evening in May. The air was soft, balmy and refreshing, and all things seemed sweetly serene.

From the open window of a magnificent old building, which, with its grounds, was inclosed within high stone walls, looked forth a lovely child attired in black, and having a white cap on her head. Wondering how she came to be in this strange place, with whom she was, and what the future had in store for her, Nina — for it was she — looked sadly at the beautiful view. She at first thought she was with the "sisters," but on reflecting a moment, remembered how hard her aunt was on them, and thought she could not have been put in their care. She knew she had been given

something to make her unconscious for a time, so she would not know where she was being taken.

Nina sat sad and silent there, under the influence of her troubled thoughts and her mysterious surroundings. Feeling that she had "lived" a sad and tragic poem, she began thus to soliloquize: "'The twilight deepens.' Soon 'night will drop her dark mantle' and 'shut out the light of day.' So comes upon my poor heart a 'pall of darkness, quenching the last lingering sunbeam of hope.' 'Dismal shadows seem to gather round my soul.' Oh, I know how the poet felt who said 'The purple sky of life's smiling morn was soon o'ercast by leaden clouds, on which the rainbow's glow is never seen.' They say I must forget my home and my childhood. But I can not - no, never. The 'enchanting scenes' as I knew them 'are still fresh in my memory' and tempt me sorely to fly from this cheerless abode. My inmost nature rebels against being confined in this place. Once I was so happy. 'Sweet contentment and joy and all delights were mine.' How long ago it seems! Loved and caressed by a precious, precious mother, 'gaily I glided forth on the primrose path of pleasure.' But, 'why dwell I on the past or think of golden hours no more to return?' I would place my all upon the altar - all I have I'd freely give, even my life, if only I could gain heaven—and my mother!" Then, bowing her head, Nina clasped her feverish brow, as if to check the burning current of her thoughts, and her heart's deep emotion found expression in flowing tears.

Suddenly she was startled by a sharp, stern voice saying: "Ninaetta! Ninaetta! Has Satan put it in your heart to rebel against God?"

"Alas! I know not," replied the sobbing Nina.

"Undutiful, undutiful child! Banished from your home for disobedience, through kindness, we have given you an abiding place for life. You can never leave these walls until dead; but you will have all your heart's desires gratified here, and now have you no gratitude? I am King Thumii, ruler of all in this great building."

"Heaven forbid that I should be ungrateful," replied Nina.

"You will have to worship those in this enclosure who are over you, and all the inmates that are your superiors, before you can gain heaven," said this strange man.

"I worship men or women? No, no! I only worship God,—and he is not here!" said Nina.

"You are rebellious. We have had others like you. We do not want to deal more severely with you than we ever have with any one else. But submit to our will you must, and believe in me you must," said "King Thumii."

"Well," said Nina, "if doubting you is sinful, then I am a sinner, nor will a lifetime in this place ever make me a saint. I want to know where I am and who put me here. You are not Catholics, are you? What are you?"

"Talk not of what you understand not. Wouldst thou fathom the profound mysteries of religion? 'Tis presumption! Little canst thou comprehend of things spiritual, nor need thy weak brain be troubled, for thy path of duty lies plainly open before thine eyes. 'Tis to believe in 'King Thumii,' and obey, absolutely, his wife, who is 'Lady Superior' here, and him.' As he said this he pointed to himself. He then left the room.

In the morning, Nina arose at early dawn, resolving to devote the day to solid devotion, in so far as she could. "It will do me good and give me strength," she thought. Having determined this within herself, she sat down by the window, there to devote a holy hour to religious meditation. Unawares, her attention was attracted by the merry little birds, gaily fluttering and sweetly singing among the green branches of the locust trees, that shaded the grounds in the rear of the building. Involuntarily she exclaimed: "Happy

creatures! free to fly at will, and on your downy wings to sail in the sweet, fresh air, wheresoe'er fancy leads. What delights, what transports are yours! While here is wretched Nina, sad-hearted, motherless, imprisoned, and even cut off from her church, her friends, and all that's delightful on the face of the earth! Suggestions of the devil," she thought, "who is always seeking to allure whom he would destroy"- and she put her mind again on holy things. But presently, in the midst of her reflections, a bevy of girls passing by on the street, not far distant, caught her eye. They seemed so free, so happy, and when their ringing laughter and tones of gladness came floating on the air, a longing thrill ran through her heart. Then the thought came to her mind: "I will run away and go to Miss Kaughman!" But something seemed to say: "Nay nay, thy wings are clipped; how canst thou?"

"Strange conceit, Ninaetta! Strange conceit," remarked King Thumii, appearing suddenly and advancing toward the door of the apartment. Pausing a moment on the threshold, he added: "And wicked as strange! Come, go you to confession," and he left abruptly.

Nina arose to her feet and took a few reluctant steps as if to obey his "kingly" command; but she suddenly stopped, and after bending her eyes thoughtfully upon the floor a moment, said to herself in a suppressed voice: "Much shall I profit, making confessions of my sins to a rogue, a hardened, heartless sinner, as I am almost persuaded he is." She took her seat again, and was soon 'lost in a sea of gloomy thoughts.'

Days rolled by, and months, and now two years had passed since Nina awoke in the mysterious building, situated she knew not where. And although grown somewhat accustomed to the monotony and daily routine of a cloistered life, she was no more satisfied with her lot than she had been at first.

Being much alone, she had ample time to meditate on the truths of religion that had been taught her in her childhood. Naturally impulsive, and at first rebellious against what she thought must be some great wrong done her, she finally concluded that the great, good God could take care of her there as well as anywhere, and that as long as it was his will for her to remain where she was, she would try to live even that restricted life in a manner that would please him, thinking that in his own good time and in his own way, she would be released. So, after a time, the first dreadful despondency at finding herself shut up in this

strange place wore away, and hope came to her that she would one day be released, though she knew not when or how.

"King Thumii's palace," as he called the immense building over which he held such absolute authority, was conducted in some ways as a convent would be. The younger girls were taught a few things, particularly sewing, by women or girls older than themselves, though little intercourse was permitted between them. Their only recreation was an occasional walk in the grounds, either alone or accompanied by one of the older "sisters," as those women having most authority were called.

After being there two years, Nina knew not much more about the place than she did at first. She still clung to her past and the memory of her mother with the same old devotion; but she had not one token from her mother left, not even her Bible. The only thing she possessed, which had any connection with the past, was the "luck charm" which old Aunt Jane in Kentucky had given her. It had always been around her neck, and no one knew of it.

She had found one girl friend in this mysterious building, who had been sent there when a little girl, and was now almost grown. For a long time Nina had been trying to persuade this girl to tell her where they were. At last, one day, Brunetta — for that was her name — told Nina they were in Mexico, and in a place where girls were sent and kept hid all their lives by persons who wanted to be rid of them. "Some are sent for one thing, some another," she said. "I was told why I was sent by an old lady, who was here for years, and had some way of finding out about people. Peace be to her spirit; she has gone."

"Tell me why you were sent here, please," said Nina.

"Well," said Brunetta, "my father was a rich man, but all his money came by my mother, who died when I was a baby. Father married again and had two more children; then he died, leaving half of his wealth to me and half to my stepmother and her children. If I died, all was to go to her and her children. I suppose she did not want to kill me—perhaps she did not dare—so she had me stolen by gypsies, and for thirteen years I have been here. Once here, it is like the spider and the fly—you are in a web from which it is impossible to get out—but you are safe from the world."

"And are you satisfied to always stay here, Brunetta?" said Nina. "Well, I have never known anything else, and may just as well live here as anywhere, I suppose. I enjoy the grounds — there are over seventy-five acres in the inclosure. The palms, the roses, the strawberries and all such things please me. My religion consists in doing right as far as I know, for, of course, I can't believe all the stuff they would have you believe here. If I could get away, I shouldn't know where to go. Some of the sisters seem to like me, and I am not treated unkindly. They have killed one woman, though, since I have been here."

"Oh, tell me about it!" exclaimed Nina.

"No! No! not now. I see we are being watched. Perhaps I'll tell you next week; I'll have you under my care then, and for a month will spend most of my time with you.— Have you any work for to-day?" Brunetta asked in a louder tone.

" No."

"Well, they will probably send you some soon."

They did all kinds of "drawn work," made point lace and embroidery, and it was sent to "the States." They were all allowed one hour in the afternoon to walk in the grounds. That day, when Nina had finished the work that had been laid off for her, she thought, as she smoothed back her hair, soft, glossy and beautiful as ever: "I will

dress my hair and take a stroll down to that large palm-tree. It has grown to be a friend, or, rather, it almost seems like my 'church,' for there God often sends sweet thoughts to me, and nowhere else do I so love to be when I pray to him on high."

Just then "King Thumii" walked into the room and said: "Ninaetta, prepare yourself immediately. Your hair is to be cut and you are to take the veil. Then comes the 'pall of death.'"

"What do you mean, 'King'?" asked Nina.

"I mean that when the veil falls over your face, it shuts you from the world, forever."

It was a scene never to be forgotten, and one calculated not only to awaken the tenderest sympathies of the heart, but to arouse the burning indignation of the soul, when Nina, meekly kneeling at the feet of the pretended priest, was compelled to "take the veil." She never looked more beautiful than at that hour. There was a sweet pensiveness in her expression, yet a death-like paleness overspread her delicate features during the whole procedure. Her beautiful hair, which fell so gracefully upon her shoulders and hung in ringlets about her temples, was cut first. (They told her long hair was a vain ornament.) A black cap was then placed upon her head, as directed by

'King Thumii." After this, she was lifted from her knees and placed in a coffin, which was closed for a few minutes, then opened, and she was resurrected. Then she was put in a small room, seemingly underground - for the light was very dim - 'to do penance.' She had not been there long when a thin, spirit-like form in black crept up to her, and taking her by the hand, said, in a low, intense voice: "Poor child, you are deluded, you are deceived. These are not priests and sisters, neither are they gypsies. They are devils. They are our own American people who pretended to start this institution for a school, calling it a Catholic convent; but they run it as a home for people banished from the world. Some one has paid them well to have you put here, as some one did years ago to have me put here. Little by little they will take away more and more of your liberty — bury you deeper and deeper. Soon you will not be allowed to go out in the grounds. I am shut off from all, even the light, and in this dark, damp cellar, I spin the number thousand thread that is worked by our lace-makers."

Nina's heart sank within her as she looked at this woman, for, as she grew accustomed to the dim light, she could see how emaciated and holloweyed she was. "What a fate may be in store for me!" said Nina to herself, in a sad, despondent tone, as the woman left her.

The "Lady Superior" now approached the threshold and said: "Ninaetta, come, you can go for a stroll in the garden now."

With joy, Nina followed her, and soon went out into the open air once more. The trees and flowers and blue sky never seemed more beautiful. She hastened to her favorite spot beneath the tall palm-tree, where she threw herself on her knees and wept bitterly, but made no sound.

It happened that some excursionists, as they roamed around the beautiful city of Mexico and its vicinity, were passing by in the street, and one lady — a Mrs. Roth — said to the guide: "Oh, what is this magnificent building, with its beautiful garden?"

"Well, madam," said the guide, "this is 'King Thumii's 'palace,' as he calls it; but 'tis understood that it's a kind of convent owned by him. He is very rich."

"I wonder if they would allow us to go in," said Mrs. Roth.

"I will see," said the guide.

Just then "King Thumii" walked out of the gate, and Mrs. Roth, turning to the others, said: "I will ask him."

Then stepping forward, she said: "This is 'King Thumii' if I mistake not. I am Mrs. Roth, from Ohio. Pardon me, but would you grant us the privilege of going through your grounds?" Mrs. Roth was attractive and pleasant — one of the kind who are rarely denied any request.

"With pleasure, madam, with pleasure," said "King Thumii," and held the gate open for them to pass in. He did not invite them to go through the building, however, and left before they could ask that privilege of him. As they went quietly through the beautiful grounds, their attention was attracted by a lovely little creature beneath a large palm on her knees, seemingly in sorrow. They approached without her knowledge, and heard her say softly: "Oh, mamma! if you could only speak to me through the clouds and tell me what is to become of me!"

Just then "Sister Isadore," as she was called, came quickly up and spoke harshly to her. The child jumped, and as she hurriedly arose, dropped something on the ground near the tree. Without turning, she walked rapidly toward the house.

CHAPTER XII.

"Mr. Everton, what is the matter? You seem so excited. What is it? Do tell us," said Mrs. Roth to Mr. Everton, who was one of the party going through "King Thumii's" grounds.

"Do not ask me," he said, "I can not tell any one now; but I wish you would all go on to the hotel and leave me here. I can not go until later. I am compelled to stay here until after dark."

"You seem to have lost your senses, and I am afraid you will lose your way, too," said Miss Samei, another of the party, laughingly. "Well, let's go and leave him, and some of these Mexicaniennes will get him," she added.

But there was no laugh in him. He had, at last, found the lost jewel, the precious child, he and Miss Kaughman had searched for in vain, and given up as gone forever.

After all the rest had left the grounds he concealed himself in a bed of tall rose bushes, thinking he would stay there until night came on and the darkness thickened sufficiently to shield him from observation. While there he might form some plan as to what he would do.

When he saw Nina that afternoon under the

palm-tree he could hardly believe his eyes; but when a few moments later he picked up the "charm" there was no question of her identity, for she had shown him the trinket that Christmas he and she became so well acquainted at the Kaughmans, and he had carved her name on it.

He determined to let her know immediately that she had a friend who had found her and would help her. How he would accomplish this he soon decided.

A stately locust-tree stood almost opposite Nina's window, extending one of its branches in the direction thereof until it almost touched the sill. Mr. Everton thought this must be the window of her room, for from his hiding-place he saw Nina near it with her work, bending far out to get the light.

After the daylight had all gone, and night came on, he made his way cautiously to the locust-tree and then quickly began to climb. Luckily enough, when he reached the limb nearest the window, he found the window open, and Nina, poor, dear, little thing, down on her knees saying her evening prayer. Taking advantage of his position, he flung a note in, which fell at her knees, after which he rapidly got down from the tree and left the grounds without being discovered.

Filled with wonder and surprise, Nina cut short her prayer and quickly picked up the note. She looked at it with amazement, and was afraid to open it. So many strange and trying things had happened to her that day that she scarcely knew what to expect. She slipped quietly across to her friend Brunetta's room, and said hurriedly: "Come in my room quick, Brunetta."

"Oh! what is it, Nina?" said Brunetta. 'You look so pale."

"This letter," whispered Nina; "it came so strangely, as if tossed by a spirit hand. I saw no one, heard no one — it is so strange. Am I dreaming? What does it mean? Oh, it is Mr. Arthur Everton's writing," she said, nervously, beginning to weep.

"My child, read it!" said Brunetta; "then you will see."

"I can not; you must," said Nina, in a trembling voice.

"Very well; hand it to me," said Brunetta. She opened it and began to read in a subdued tone:

My Dearest Little Friend:

We searched the world over for you, and at last concluded you were gone from us forever. A body was found in the river at the foot of Gay Street, which it was thought had your clothes on. Neither Miss Kaughman nor I believed, however, that it was you, dear child, and

we did not give up hope of finding you for a long time.

I do not know whether your dear little eyes will read the words now being traced by my trembling hand or not, but heaven may favor my wishes, and they may reach you in safety.

I saw you in the garden this afternoon, and realized immediately what had become of you. I am now in the garden, not far from you, and shall, some way, somehow, get you away from this place before many days go by

Ah, my dear little one, I esteemed thee a rare flower, blooming, perhaps, to bless my existence, and be cherished by my own hand, but ere I was aware a rogue had plucked the opening blossom.

'Tis passing strange that one so pure, so guileless, so sweet, so true-hearted, should be made, by the black and false-hearted, to sup from sorrow's side of life's cup.

Sweet child, I will surely find a way to make you free and happy. Trust me.

ARTHUR EVERTON.

"Yes, it's from him," said Nina excitedly, when Brunetta had finished; "but the mysterious manner of its coming is marvelous as a dream. It is like a miracle! To think that Mr. Everton was in the garden! Give me the letter, Brunetta. No one must know of it. Oh, where shall I hide it?"

"Better destroy it," said Brunetta; "that would be safest."

"Well, I must read it again, first," said Nina.
"Do you know, Brunetta, I always thought I'd get away from here some day."

"You are not away yet, Nina, and if they have the least inkling of a letter having reached you, you will have no end of trouble, - and, my little friend, I want to tell you while I have the chance: An important discussion took place about you today. 'King Thumii' and 'Lady Superior' were walking in the garden during my 'recreation hour.' I heard them mention your name, and so when they sat down and began to talk, I hid near them and listened. Their tones were low, and I did not hear all they said; but their talk had something to do with some property which, it seems, is by right yours. They were determining on a plan to make you sign some papers. She said you were such a mild, unsuspicious girl, she thought there would be no difficulty; but King Thumii said that, notwithstanding your mildness and unsuspicion, you had a mind of your own and might take a notion about signing the papers as you did about going to confession and bowing in worship to him and your 'other superiors.' They then decided to have you 'take the veil' before broaching the subject."

By this time Nina's eyes were wide with wonder and alarm; but she exclaimed in a low voice: "I am glad you've warned me. I'll never sign their papers if I die for it!"

"Well, I am sorry for you, Nina, and I don't know how to advise you; but I've stayed here now longer than is safe. Good-night," said Brunetta, and was soon in her own small room across the corridor.

Nina read her letter again, had just burnt it, and was blowing out the light when she heard some one at the door.

"Is that you, Brunetta?" she said.

"No," said Sister Isadore, "it is I. Your lamp has burned nearly half an hour longer than it should. Are you ill? Is anything the matter?"

"No, I am not ill," answered Nina. "I did not know it was so late."

"Didn't you hear the bell? You lose your recreation hour to-morrow for not heeding it," Sister Isadore said in a cross, sleepy tone, and left her.

The next morning Mr. Everton went again to visit "King Thumii's" grounds, but was not admitted. He then decided to see the city authorities, thinking they might assist him in having Nina released; but he remembered that he had no right, which they were bound to recognize, to take Nina away, and soon found they felt quite friendly toward "King Thumii" and his institution; so he had to give up all idea of getting help from them. In the afternoon, he tried to visit the grounds again, about the same time he had seen Nina

under the palm on the previous day, but was again denied admittance.

He then determined to go at once to Knoxville and consult the Kaughmans about what was best to be done. Together they might arrange some plan to effect Nina's escape. On the journey he had ample time to try to form some plan of procedure, but had thought of none that was satisfactory when he arrived. He lost no time telling them whom he had seen, how he had found the *luck charm*, and thus beyond a doubt established Nina's identity; how he had tried again, but in vain, to see her.

"Why didn't you see the authorities?" asked Mrs. Kaughman.

"The authorities there not only tolerate, but even protect them, regarding their place as a religious institution. They would not listen to us, would say we had no right to interfere," Arthur Everton replied.

"Well, if that is so, it will be a case of 'Greek meet Greek,' "said Miss Kaughman, "and we shall have to exercise our own ingenuity. Let me think a minute."

After a few moments she said: "I will get her out, but you will have to go to Mexico with me and help me."

"How will you do it?" asked Mrs. Kaughman and Mr. Everton at once.

"Well, I'll tell you how. I'll dress myself in black, put on a face like a tombstone, and go to that old 'King Thumii' with a doleful story; tell him my friends are all dead; that I was in love with a man and he has died, and that I am thinking of becoming a recluse in some religious institution for the rest of my days; that I have some money - \$20,000 or more - which, if I enter his 'convent,' I'll give him to do good with. Then, after he agrees to let me come, I'll tell him I want to spend a few days there as a visitor before I go to stay, to see if the life there is quiet enough for me. Thinking I am a discouraged, but harmless woman, tired of life, he will do as I ask, especially when he thinks of the money, and if Nina is there, I shall surely find her."

"Yes, and you may get in there and not get out, and then we'll all be 'at our ropes' end' on your account," said her mother.

However, they talked it over, arranged details, and decided they would go to Mexico at once. In eight days they were there, and Miss Kaughman, in her black attire, soon went to "King Thumii's palace." She played her part perfectly. The slightest suspicion did not enter "King

Thumii's "mind as to her real reason for visiting him. Hypocrite that he was, he was himself gulled. At first he made some objection to the liberties she asked, during her preliminary visit, but finally agreed to allow her the privileges she insisted on having. He instructed the "Lady Superior" to allow her to visit all the inmates except Nina, who, he had determined, should see no one until she had signed certain papers for him.

Miss Kaughman made haste to visit all parts of the building to which she had access. She saw a hundred or more women, but not Nina. Going to Brunetta, whom she singled out as being approachable and unsuspicious, she said to her:

"Are you the youngest inmate of the institution?"

"Why, no," said Brunetta; "there is one younger — Ninaetta. She is about fourteen, I think, though looks older."

"Have I met her?" asked Miss Kaughman.

"No, no; she is in the dungeon cell for not doing something 'King Thumii' wished her to."

Just then "Sister Isadore" came up with a smile that scarcely hid the expression of curiosity on her face. She had been told to allow the lady to talk to any one she wished, but to always hear what was said. "Brunetta has been here since she was a little child," she said. "Brunetta, I suppose you have been telling the lady how fond you are of our lovely garden."

"Let us walk in it now," said Miss Kaughman, before Brunetta had time to reply.

It seemed to Miss Kaughman as if the remainder of that day would never come to an end. Now that she knew where Nina was, she could hardly keep from hunting her up immediately. However, she knew it was best to wait, so contented herself with noticing halls, stairways and "out-of-theway" doors, especially those which seemed to lead below and to parts of the building she had not visited. She made up her mind how she thought she must proceed to get to the dungeon.

At last night came on, and soon all retired. The building was in darkness, except for dim lights in a few of the corridors.

"Now is my time to find Nina," thought Miss Kaughman, and the brave girl ventured forth in the darkness, determined to find her little friend or spend the night looking for her. On she went quickly, but quietly, and soon found herself in a little back hallway on the first floor she had noticed in the afternoon as being a kind of "out-of-the way" place. After groping around — it seemed

to her a very long time — she found in its far end, and around the corner of a small ell, a low door, which was locked. She was prepared for this, and was soon trying some skeleton keys she had brought with her. The third she tried unlocked the door. As she pushed it cautiously open, a damp, moldy odor greeted her nostrils. She soon discovered some narrow stone steps going down. Ah, this must lead to the place she was trying to find. How dark it was! and how damp! She began to descend, leaving the door open, but taking the keys. Soon she was at the bottom of the steps. She put out her hands and touched walls on both sides. She groped her way along. Finally she came to a door either locked or bolted. She rapped softly. A feeble voice within said: "Who is it, please?"

She well knew that sweet, faint voice, and answered: "Nina! 'Tis I, Miss Kaughman."

As Miss Kaughman said this she stubbed her toe against something at the bottom of the door. She found it was a bolt fastened on the outside. She quickly drew it, and in a moment the two were crying in each other's arms.

"Oh, Miss Kaughman, is it possible? is it true? or am I dreaming? Can it really be you! Oh! oh! oh!" Nina exclaimed. She cried and laughed

and kissed and hugged Miss Kaughman, giving vent to all the pent-up feeling of two years past.

"But what have you done, precious child, that you should be kept in this dreadful place?"

"Oh, Miss Kaughman, they tried to make me sign a paper and I refused, because it took away my right to an estate that is lawfully mine. I don't know much about it, but I know they had no right to make me sign it. "King Thumii had me put in here because I refused. Oh, he is dreadful! I almost believe he will kill me if I don't sign it! He said, when I was put here, he would give me a few days to think it over where I wouldn't be disturbed! I was afraid, when I heard you, that he was coming —but, oh, joy, I was mistaken," and Nina again threw her arms around Miss Kaughman.

"Don't you want to go away from here, Nina? We are going to take you away. How did you ever get here?"

"Do I want to go away? I would fly from this place as from perdition! How I ever got here I can not tell, for I don't know," said Nina.

Miss Kaughman spent most of the night in conversation with the abused and suffering child, and then returned to her room before any one began to stir, leaving no trace of her visit behind, except in Nina's heart.

The next morning, going to the "Lady Superior," she said in a composed manner: "I am going into the city this morning to see about some of my things. I'll be back this afternoon or evening."

She went straight to Mr. Everton and informed him of her success in finding Nina, and of the shameful way Nina was being treated.

He was enraged, and said he would go and take her away by force, if he had to kill that "King Thumii" and half his household.

"No, no!" said Miss Kaughman, "that would never do. Listen to me. I will go back this evening as I promised, for they will expect me; and you wait until midnight. Then you approach the outer door of the big wall and rap lightly twice. I being within, will unlock the door and let you in. Then we'll proceed softly to the house, which I'll also manage to have unlocked, and I'll conduct you to Nina's prison. Have a weapon with you, so if we have any trouble, we can force our way out. A carriage must be waiting at the corner for us, and mother must be at the depot with our baggage. A train leaves at two in the morning, which, if all goes well, can carry us North."

"Miss Mary, you're a General. Your plan is excellent. I will carry out my end of it, and will not fail to be on hand at the appointed time," said Mr. Everton, and he forthwith began to arrange for their speedy departure that night, or, rather, next morning.

Miss Kaughman returned to "King Thumii's" "palace" and planned how she would have the right door unlocked without any one's knowledge.

Midnight came, and found Miss Kaughman standing like a sentinel near the outer door awaiting in suspense the signal. It came. She drew the bolt and Mr. Everton entered. They neither of them spoke a word, but made their way to the building, through the halls, to the little back passage way, down the stone steps, and arrived at the cell door. They paused a moment, and were astonished to hear Nina's pitiful voice within pleading with some one to spare her life! Mr. Everton at a stroke, made mighty by wrath, burst the door asunder, and in a moment confronted "King Thumii," who stood speechless with astonishment and terror. Nina's face was as a sheet of glass with tears. She gazed a moment at Arthur Everton, then threw her arms wildly around his neck, sobbing as if her heart would break. "King Thumii," not knowing how many might be with Mr. Everton, blew out the candle he had brought to the cell, snatched up the papers, which had fallen from his hands, and escaped.

Miss Kaughman took Nina, and they hastened down the passage and up the steps, Mr. Everton leading the way. When they reached the outer door they were met by "King Thumii" and a low-bred, black Mexican. Both were flourishing heavy clubs, ready to strike them down.

Arthur Everton quickly fired, wounding "King Thumii" in the leg, and while the "King" was yelling "Murder!" the Mexican was "giving footbail."

Mr. Everton at once took Miss Kaughman and Nina to the carriage. They got in and were soon being driven rapidly to the station. They feared they might be followed, but their hearts were filled with joy that their hazardous undertaking had met with success.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Lift thyself up! oh, thou of saddened face! Cease from thy sighing, draw from out thy heart The joyful light of faith."

Mrs. Kaughman was at the station walking up and down, for she could not sit still. People wondered who the handsome, middle-aged lady, there alone at that time of the night, could be, and why she seemed so uneasy.

She looked at her watch. "Oh, dear," she thought, "the train leaves in ten minutes."

Presently a young man, a young lady and a half-grown girl, who seemed to be ill, got out of a carriage, came into the depot, and joined Mrs. Kaughman. She took the girl into her arms and kissed her fondly. Then they all went immediately to the train.

"What nice-looking people," said a woman, as they passed.

"Yes, and they seem to be in trouble," her husband replied, as he noticed the black dresses worn by Miss Kaughman and Nina.

They were soon on the train flying toward "the States" as fast as steam could carry them; but Nina was prostrate. Her close confinement for

days, and all the excitement she had passed through since, had been too much for her. She was weak and ill, and could hardly speak. They watched her tenderly through the journey, but the long trip was hard on her.

They decided to go straight to Cincinnati, which was Arthur Everton's home. He had insisted that that was the only thing to do, and the Kaughmans had agreed, glad to be guided by one so strong and energetic. They appreciated his kind thoughtfulness on the journey, and Nina, even while weak and ill, felt in a vague sort of way that Mr. Everton was the best and noblest man she had ever known. She thanked God for such a wise, strong friend. "Had he not found her way off there in Mexico," she thought, "and then gone straight after Miss Kaughman, dear, sweet friend that she was, to help him get her away?"

Arthur Everton's "Aunt Maranda," as he called her, who kept house for him, was expecting them, and had everything in readiness when they arrived. Nina was at once taken to the large, airy room prepared for her, and the tired, sick child gave a long sigh of contentment when she could at last lie down in a fresh, comfortable bed.

The Kaughmans were to stay some days at Arthur Everton's, and while there all could plan

what was best to be done with Nina. They could never take her back to Tennessee, where she had been so mistreated by her relations.

"Relations indeed!" said Miss Kaughman. They don't know the meaning of the word. Blood to them is no thicker than water!"

After a few days' rest and quiet, Nina began to feel better. She looked almost herself again one beautiful afternoon, when she came downstairs into the library, leaning on Miss Kaughman's arm.

"Well, this is fine!" said Arthur Everton, with a pleased look on his kind face as he came toward them. "But our little girl is too pale; we must put some color in her cheeks," and he took her slim, cold hand in his large, warm one.

"Miss Mary, what do you think of a drive this afternoon? I believe it would do you all good. Suppose you get your hats on while I order the carriage."

"It will be just the thing for Nina," said Miss Kaughman; "but I must write some letters before this evening's mail goes out, and mother is taking a nap. So you take Nina this afternoon and we will all go next time."

"All right," he said; "we'll go in the phaeton then.— Wouldn't you like to go, little girl?" he added. "Yes, indeed," said Nina; "how lovely it will be to get out again."

Mr. Everton was soon at the porch-steps with the horse and phaeton.

"Don't keep the little invalid out too long, Arthur," said Miss Kaughman, as he helped Nina in.

"I won't," he said, then got in himself. Nina threw a kiss to Miss Kaughman, and off they went.

Mr. Everton's bright and interesting talk soon brought smiles to Nina's sad face, and the fresh breeze gave a faint color to her pale cheeks. She enjoyed every minute of the ride, and it did his heart good to see how much better she looked.

As they were going home, she looked at him earnestly and said: "Mr. Everton, I've been wanting to tell you how grateful I am to you for all you have done for me. God, who sees my heart, knows no child was ever more grateful for anything! I can never pay you in any way, or Miss Mary, either; but I shall always love you both dearer than life. I have no mother, and I suppose I have no father. Just you and Miss Mary are all I have in this world to love, and I am thankful to God for such dear, good friends as you two have been. All that time I was at 'King Thumii's 'now

seems like a long, bad dream. Ugh! it makes me shiver to think of it. It's just as if a dark cloud had hung over me for nearly three years, but now has gone, or is passing, and I feel as if brightness is just ahead of me. Last night, as I lay upon my bed, I thought of the change in my life and my feelings. I believe I am going to be happy, and I thought I ought to be a better girl than I've ever been, and determined I would be just as good as I possibly could. Then my dear mother's face came before me, and I seemed to see her sweet smile and feel her love for me, and I thought may be I would be with her in heaven before long."

Mr. Everton listened reverently as Nina told him all that was in her heart. There was something about this little girl, with her trustful eyes and pure heart, that appealed to him as no one else had ever done.

"Well, here we are home again. I hope we did not stay too long. Come, my child, into the library," said Mr. Everton, taking Nina by the hand. "I am going to read something light and pleasant to you while you lie on the sofa and rest."

"I thought may be you were going to tell me what you were going to do with me — you and Miss Kaughman," said Nina.

"We'll tell you about that to-morrow. You

must rest now. You ought to be sleepy after being out in the air so long. You will just have time to get a little nap before tea," said Mr. Everton.

"Well, just tell me one thing, please," said Nina. "I am not going back to Knoxville, am I?"

"You can rest easy about that, my little friend," he replied. "You will never go back there."

Nina settled herself comfortably on the sofa, and he had not read five minutes before her deep breathing told him she was asleep.

He looked at her tenderly a moment. Her face was so soft and pure in outline, so sweet and refined in expression. "What a fair flower she is," he thought. If she had been his own sweet little sister, he could not have loved her more. As he pulled down the window shades and went softly from the room, he determined to do for her all an older brother would do for a dear, young sister.

The next morning, after breakfast, Mr. Everton said to Nina: "Come to the library pretty soon, little girl. We want to tell you what we've decided to do with you and see if it meets with your approval. I am going out to post some letters, but will be back in a few minutes."

"Very well," said Nina, "I shall approve of what you and Miss Kaughman think best, I know."

Going into the library, she seated herself on the sofa, and taking up a book she had begun to read the evening before, was soon lost in it. Presently she heard footsteps, and looking up, saw Mr. Everton coming in.

"Here I am, waiting for you," she said, as she laid down the book.

"Yes, so I see.—Well, Nina," he said, sitting down beside her, "you don't know how nice it seems to a lonesome fellow like me to have a sweet, little girl around the house. My home has been a different place since I've had a 'little sister.' I should just like to keep you here all the time, but, of course, you must go to school."

"Where are you going to send me to school?" Nina asked, looking at him in her earnest, trustful way.

"We have decided on Hamilton College, in Lexington, Kentucky. It's a grand old school, and I don't know of a better place for you. Many noble men and women have come out from it, and to-day stand as 'stars' in our land.

"You must write to me often, and look to me for help at any time as you would to an older brother. I shall count it a privilege, little girl, to do for you as a brother would. You will be through school in a few years, and can then come home to stay. In the meantime, vacations will come, and we can all spend them together somewhere.

"Miss Kaughman has seen to your outfit, and day after to-morrow she and her mother will go with you to Lexington. They will take you to the college, and visit there a few hours before they go on to their home in Knoxville."

Nina's eyes filled and her lips quivered, to think she would again be separated from all she had on earth to love; but she was a sensible girl, and realized she must go to school. She felt, too, that Mr. Everton would, as he said, rather have her at home, and that both he and Miss Kaughman were thinking of her best good in sending her to Hamilton College. So after a moment the tears disappeared, and she looked up with a smile as she said: "I want to do what is right, and what you and Miss Mary think best."

"You are just a darling, and I knew you would," said Miss Kaughman, coming in as Nina spake the last sentence. She kissed Nina on the forehead and sat down near her. They talked a few minutes about Hamilton College, both Mr. Everton and Miss Kaughman speaking enthusiastically of its president and professors.

Then Miss Kaughman took Nina's hand and

said: "Come, dear, I want you to see your pretty clothes before I pack them in your trunk; and you shall put a new dress on before dinner. I am tired of seeing you in that doleful black gown. It's a constant reminder of that wretch in Mexico and his sad-faced 'recluses.'"

"That's so," said Arthur, laughing. "Well, get through viewing the frocks as soon as possible. We have but two days left to be together, and we must make the most of them."

At dinner all remarked on how well Nina looked in her tasteful new gown. It was a pretty, soft shade of blue, which intensified the depth and luster of her sweet blue eyes, and set off the delicate fairness of her skin as not other color could. Arthur Everton smiled approvingly. "'Tis symbolic," he said: "the pure azure of a clear sky after the black storm-clouds have rolled away."

"Arthur, I didn't know you were so poetical," said Miss Kaughman.

"Any one can be poetical when inspired by the kind of beauty that touches him most," he answered, smiling at Nina, who glanced at him with the frank, pleased look of an innocent child.

"There, Nina," said Miss Kaughman, "that is the sweetest compliment I ever heard paid to personal beauty. Make your knight a bow and give him a flower."

Nina leaned over and took a white lily from a vase in the center of the table, which she handed him with a smile so sweet and unconscious, it was almost holy.

"Now," said he gaily, as he stuck it in his button-hole, "I am proud and happy, for I've won my lady's 'favor'!"

All laughed merrily, and this bright chatter went on. It was in scenes like this that these people, whose hearts were full of good-will toward all men, bubbled over with love for each other.

Arthur Everton had that large hospitality of heart, as well as manners, which took his friends in, and made them feel, literally, as free and "at home" in his home as they did in their own. It was no wonder that all felt sad when the day came on which Nina and the Kaughmans were to leave. They were going on the morning train, and were obliged to make rather an early start; for, as Arthur Everton's home was at Walnut Hills, they were quite a distance from the station. They said "Goodbye" to the servants and to "Aunt Maranda," who said she hoped they would all come again soon. She said that she "loved to have folks around, because then 'twasn't so lonesome."

Mr. Everton went with them to the train, and after he had told the others "Goodbye," bent down to kiss Nina. She put both arms around his neck and clung to him, as if she couldn't let him go. In a moment, he gently removed her arms, and neither said a word. She, like himself, was too full to speak. He laid something in her lap, and got off the train just as it started.

They saw him from the car-window as the train moved out of the station, and waved their hands to him. He lifted his hat, and smilingly waved his hand, but could say nothing, for there was a lump in his throat.

Then away they went.

"Arthur Everton is a man in a thousand," said Miss Kaughman. "Open your parcel, Nina dear; I have an idea there is some candy in it."

Her keen perception told her that Nina was struggling to control her feelings, and she thought she would help her by giving her something to do. Nina untied the parcel. It contained two pretty books and a box of candied fruits. Mr. Everton's card, on which he had written, "Au revoir, but not goodbye," fell from the parcel as Nina opened it.

"What a nice fellow Arthur is!" said Mrs. Kaughman, picking up the card and handing it to Nina.

"Yes, I told you he was one in a thousand. Don't you think so, Nina?" said Miss Mary.

"I think he is the loveliest man in the world!" said Nina.

"Well, I make but one exception," said Miss Kaughman, looking out of the window wistfully a moment, as she wiped a tear away. She was thinking of one a thousand miles away,— one who, though some fifteen years older than Arthur, and not nearly so handsome, or so rich in this world's goods as he, had such a spirit, such a mind, such a heart, as her woman's soul bowed in reverence before— a man who had achieved great things because his soul was great and he couldn't help it. Her heart went out to him, then to God in prayer for his safe keeping.

She turned toward them in a moment with a sweet but far-away look in her bright, dark eyes, and took some of Nina's candy as it was handed to her. Directly, she was with them again, and began to give Nina some last words of counsel and advice, telling her it would be best not to talk of her past life to the girls at college and the new friends she would make in Lexington. "Live in the present, get interested in all around you, Nina, and like every one you can like; but you will understand for yourself, dear, why 'tis best you

should be discreet about your past. People go to Hamilton College from all over the South. Mrs. St. Clair might make trouble if she heard you were there, and there is no telling what inconvenience that Thumii or his agents might still put us to. I know the president very well, and shall tell him a little of your history. It is not necessary for others to know it."

Nina listened, and determined to follow Miss Kaughman's advice.

After less than three hours' ride they were in Lexington, and soon arrived at Hamilton College. The president received them cordially, and introduced his sweet young wife, who was as good as she was pretty.

Nina's room was assigned to her and her baggage attended to. Miss Kaughman saw her comfortably settled, and had a talk with the president before she and Mrs. Kaughman left her. The time of parting came, but Nina was learning self-control as she grew older, and save for the tight embrace and tears that would come to her eyes, she was calm. Mary Kaughman's own eyes filled as she wiped away Nina's tears and kissed for the third time her dear little friend. "I'll be up here to see you, dear, in a few weeks," she said brightly as she

left Nina, "and you know we can write to each other as often as we wish."

Nina soon made the acquaintance of her roommate, Miss Tucker, a Southern belle, whose uncle was a wealthy planter. She was a handsome girl, with large, dark eyes and black hair, and had quite winning ways. She soon told Nina she was an orphan, but lived with her aunt and uncle, who worshiped her. She seeemd to have everything she wanted, and confided to Nina that her uncle and aunt were "awful good" to her, gave her "seventy-five dollars a month for pin money"; also said she "hated the old college and professors and books, and all that kind of thing," but supposed she "had to be educated." In fact, she did not like anything connected with books or study just regarded the whole thing as a trying ordeal that had to be got through, somehow.

"Miss Boise, what is your first name?" she said, when she had finished talking about herself.

- "'Nina' is my first name," said the latter, quietly.
 - "Well, my name is 'Emma Lee.'"
- "Why," said Nina, "I thought your name was 'Tucker.'"
 - "Well, it is Emma Lee Tucker."
 - "Oh, yes," said Nina, "I might have known."

"Why do you wear your hair cut so short? You know it is not stylish to have short hair," said Emma Lee.

Nina hesitated — she remembered what Miss Kaughman had advised her about keeping her past to herself — then said: "I am sorry now that it is short, though I did not care much when it was cut."

They had a beautiful room, and the two girls sat in it talking until the supper bell rang.

Emma Lee went down without waiting for Nina, who stopped a moment to smooth her hair.

"I'll wait for you at the dining-room door and take you in to supper," said Emma Lee, as she went down the hall. "I want to speak to one of the girls before supper."

"All right. Thank you," said Nina.

Emma Lee was besieged before she hardly got down-stairs.

"Oh, Emma Lee, how do you like your room-mate? I think she is beautiful! What is her name? Is she nice?" said several girls, talking at once.

"Her name is Nina Boise," Emma Lee answered.

"How do you like her?" repeated Mabel Cox.

"I don't know," said Emma Lee. "She seems

to have perfectly grand things, all new. I don't believe she has an old dud, not one. One of the first things she got out was her Bible — but, oh, girls, it was a grand Bible — white kid, with gold clasps. She said it was a present."

"Where does she live?" asked Mary Tillman.

"Giminy Christmas, if I know! All she will tell you is her name. She is funny"—

"Well, Emma Lee, doesn't she talk at all?" said Jennie Black.

"Oh, yes, she talks, but not one word about herself. She looks sad to me."

"Well, let's all 'pump,'" said Jennie Black. 'We'll call to-night, and what we don't get out of her won't be worth getting."

Then all went into the dining-room except Emma Lee. She waited a moment for Nina, whom she heard coming down the stairs.

As they went and took their places at the table, friendly and admiring glances, as well as curious ones, were cast at Nina. If she noticed the interest she excited, she realized it was because she was a "new girl," and thought they would soon get used to her. She was soon enjoying her supper and listening to Emma Lee and the girl next to her talk about the next day's lessons. They seemed glad to include her in the conversation, and the supper hour passed pleasantly.

That evening, when Nina was hanging up some of her things, Emma Lee asked: "Haven't you been through a long spell of illness, Miss Boise? — typhoid fever or something?"

- "No," said Nina. "Why?"
- "You are so white and thin," said Emma Lee,
 "I thought perhaps you had."
- "Well, you know some people are white and thin just because it's natural for them to be that way," said Nina.
- "Come in, girls," said Emma Lee, in answer to a rap at the door, which was party open.
- "Oh, Jennie and Mabel. Girls, this is Miss Boise — Miss Cox and Miss Black, Miss Boise," said Emma Lee, introducing them.

They bowed politely, and had hardly got seated when there was another knock. This time it was Miss Jones and Miss Tillman. They were introduced, and soon all were seated and ready for the "inquiry."

- "Where are you from, Miss Boise?" asked Miss Tillman, sweetly.
- "Where am I from?" said Nina, wondering what to say.
 - "Yes, where is your home? I mean."
- "Oh! yes; well, it is here for the present," Nina said.

They glanced at each other and were silent a moment; then Miss Jones asked: "How far have you traveled to-day, Miss Boise?"

"I really don't know," said Nina; "I did not ask the distance."

There was another pause; then Miss Black said: "Miss Boise, have you any brothers or sisters?"

"Not here," said Nina, who now began to think they had asked her questions enough. Rising from her chair, she said: "Girls, I have a new book; wouldn't one of you like to read aloud to the rest of us?"

"Oh, no, thank you, not to-night," said Mary Tillman. "I reckon you're tired and would like to go to bed. I must go myself very soon." She presently said "Good night" and went. In a short time the rest left the room one by one, filled with wonder, and, strange to say, with admiration, at a girl who would not talk about herself!

Emma Lee then thought she would "try her hand once more" at questioning Nina; but she had hardly begun when Nina said: "You will pardon me, please, but I wish to read and meditate for a while before bed-time."

Then she went across the room, took her Bible, and opened it. When she had finished reading,

she leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes. She prayed earnestly that God would help her do what was right and keep her dear friends from harm.

Emma Lee looked at her wonderingly a few moments, then went to bed.

As days came and went, the girls learned to love Nina, but found that they could not learn anything about her which she did not want them to know.

Her thoughts were often of Arthur Everton, and his thoughts were often of her. They felt very near each other in spirit.

CHAPTER XIV.

Nina Boise stood, one evening, on the marble steps of Mr. Everton's beautiful residence at Walnut Hills, with a letter in her hand, which she was reading.

It was vacation-time, and some days had passed since she had returned from school. Aunt Maranda and she, except for the servants, were alone in the house, for Mr. Everton had gone away on a business trip shortly after her arrival, and had not yet returned.

Aunt Maranda came out and sat on the front porch with her fancy work; but Nina went on reading until she had finished her letter.

Nina was now fifteen, tall for her age, but straight and finely formed. Her broad straw hat shaded, but did not conceal her features, and when she looked up at Aunt Maranda, the sunlight fell upon a face of such exquisite beauty as is rarely seen. Her face was oval, and so perfect in contour that, if measured, it would have conformed exactly to the "rule of art"; the nose was as delicate and clearly cut as that of a Greek goddess; the sensitive mouth a veritable Cupid's bow, with

a little downward droop that gave a serious cast to the countenance; the deep, purplish blue eyes were full of expression and marvelously beautiful. Her hair, which had grown so that it just reached her shoulders, was of that uncommon shade between gold and bronze, and as the sun shone on it, its rippling ringlets of burnished glory seemed a very aureola. She was very fair, and usually had no color; but her skin was so thin and delicate that the least exercise of excitement brought a faint soft pink to her face and throat. Nina's seeming utter unconsciousness of her beauty added much to its charm, and she still had the frank, sweet manner of an unspoiled child.

Aunt Maranda looked at her intently as the girl read her letter, and came to the conclusion that Nina was, without doubt, the loveliest creature she had ever seen. Aunt Maranda was a plain, almost homely woman herself, past middle age, sensible and practical in most things, but like many plain women, in her secret heart, she set a very high value on personal beauty, having a reverence for it far beyond the ordinary. She regarded Nina with a kind of worship, which, however, did not interfere with her blunt manner and a habit she had of speaking her mind freely when she happened to feel like it.

Notwithstanding their great dissimilarity and the fact that Nina was still a child, Aunt Maranda had found her very companionable. They had one topic of conversation upon which they always agreed — admiration for Arthur Everton.

Aunt Maranda was a distant relative, who, having been left destitute shortly after the death of Arthur Everton's father, had been given a home in his mother's house when Arthur was still a child. She had become invaluable to Mrs. Everton, who was something of an invalid, and after her death, had naturally taken charge of Arthur's house.

"Aunt Maranda!" said Nina, sitting down on the top step, and looking at her with a bright smile, "what do you think—I have a letter from Mr. Arthur. He says he will be home soon and will bring some one with him that I shall be charmed to see. Who do you suppose it can be?"

"The Kaughmans, of course," said Aunt Maranda.

"Oh, yes! I would like to see them," said Nina; "but somehow I don't believe he meant the Kaughmans. My heart went pitapat as I read the letter. It said, 'Some one that our little girl will be overjoyed to see.' You know the Kaughmans are not with him, so how can he bring them? He is so good and sweet, I just love that man!"

"Yes, I believe you do, Nina, and no doubt you will marry him some day."

"Aunt Maranda! He is my dearest friend and is like a big brother to me."

"Yes, I know how these 'dearest friends' who are 'like brothers' usually turn out."

"But, Aunt Maranda, I am just a little girl yet!"

"You will not always be a little girl, and some day it may be just the thing," said Aunt Maranda. "He is a true, good man, and worthy of any one."

"Why, Aunt Maranda, 'you have bees in your bonnet,' as my school friends say. Mr. Arthur and my dear Miss Mary will marry, I think."

"Who do you call your dear Miss Mary?" asked Aunt Maranda.

"Why, Miss Kaughman," replied Nina.

"Oh, pshaw! judging from the letters she got when she was here, some other man has her heart, — besides, they've known each other since they were babies, and are sort of far-off kin; if they'd been going to marry, they'd have done it long ago," Aunt Maranda said.

"All the same, I think they will," said Nina, with a wise little nod of her head.

Just then a boy came up the walk and handed Nina a telegram.

"Oh, Aunt Maranda," she said, jumping up, "a message! Whom can it be from?"

"I suppose it's from Mr. Arthur," said Aunt Maranda.

"I wonder what is the matter. I just got a letter. Read it quick. I am shaking all over."

Aunt Maranda took the telegram and read:

"Will be home at eight this evening.

ARTHUR EVERTON."

"Oh, he will be here in less than an hour! I am so glad. I wonder why he is coming sooner than he expected!" Nina exclaimed.

"Couldn't tell," said Aunt Maranda, gathering up her work. "I must go and see that his room is all right and things are comfortable for him."

Nina followed her into the house, and after walking restlessly around for a while, sat down in the library and reread her letter. It puzzled her more and more to think who Mr. Arthur could bring with him. "I wonder why he did not tell me," she thought. "He didn't say anything about bringing any one, in the telegram — may be, after all, he is coming alone. I expect he has just finished his business and thought he'd come right home without waiting, and let this mysterious somebody that I shall so love to see come as soon as he or she can. Who can it be? Well, well, I

must be patient, and he is coming anyway!"—"Oh, there he is now," she exclaimed, as she heard wheels outside. She ran into the hall just as he opened the front door.

"Oh, Mr. Arthur!" she said, running up to him.

"How is our little girl? Is she glad to see me?" he asked, taking her hands in his.

"Yes, indeed! and I am glad you did not go to Europe," she said, as they walked together to the library.

"Why, my dear little Nina, I had no intention of going to Europe. What put that in your head?"

"Don't you remember," she replied, "when you went away you said may be you would have to go a long journey — that you might not be able to find those you wished to see, without?"

"Oh, and you thought a long journey meant Europe?" said he, laughing. 'Well, I found my people without going the long journey, and they — well, I'll tell you about them to-morrow."

Aunt Maranda now came in and welcomed him home, and after they had chatted a while he said to Nina: "Little girl, you run off to bed early to-night, and sleep good, so you can get up with the birds in the morning. Perhaps you and I will have a drive before breakfast."

As Nina went up the stairs, she smilingly said

to herself: "That's a funny freak. Why couldn't we go after breakfast?"

She was soon sound asleep, and knew nothing until Iran, the house-maid, rapped at her door in the morning, and said: "It's time to get up, Miss Nina!"

"What time is it, Iran — seven o'clock?" asked Nina, but half awake.

"Oh, no, not six yet," said Iran, and went on down the hall.

After a moment, Nina remembered she was to get up early. She was soon dressed and down. Arthur met her at the bottom of the stairs, and after wishing her 'Good morning," led her into the library, where she was rather surprised to see Dr. Ouden, the family physician, seated and talking with Aunt Maranda.

Nina was quick to perceive that something out of the ordinary was the matter, for Aunt Maranda had been crying, and looked at her curiously as she came in.

"Good morning, Miss Nina, how are you this morning?" said the doctor.

"Very well indeed, thank you," said Nina, sitting down on the sofa.

She began to tremble, she knew not why, and

wondered what was coming. Arthur Everton sat down beside her.

"My child," he began, "in the past you have had deep sorrows. I and others who love you tried to lighten them as we could, but God and your own goodness helped you most to bear them. Your belief in Him who is great and merciful brought hope to your heart when it was cast down; and, Nina, though your trials have been many, great happiness is in store for you"—

"Yes, Mr. Arthur, I know I have much to make me happy, and I do thank God for my dear friends; but there is one sorrow that can not be healed. When I think of my darling mother, who was such a devout Christian, such a lover of God, I still can not help wondering why she was taken from me."

"Well," said Aunt Maranda, "you think your mother is in heaven. Would you call her back to this life again, if you could?"

"Think my mother is in heaven? Why, Aunt Maranda, I know she is there! Would I call her back if I could? I—I think I would. Oh, I can't help it—I know I would! I so often long to put my arms around her again. Oh, I think she would be glad to come to her child, if she could, even from heaven."

Nina's voice had grown very low and full of feeling. Presently she gave a great sob, and losing all control of her feelings, leaned over on the back of the sofa and cried as if her heart would break.

"Come, come, dear child, don't cry so," said Mr. Everton.

"Here, Nina, take this," said the doctor, giving her something to quiet her nerves when she had grown a little calmer.

While she was taking it, some one handed Mr. Everton a telegram.

"They've missed connection and won't get here until ten o'clock," he said, in a low tone, to Aunt Maranda. "We may as well have breakfast, and I'll tell her afterwards."

"Come, Nina," said Aunt Maranda; "we'll go to breakfast. You'll feel better after you eat something."

"Doctor, you'll stay to breakfast?" said Arthur.

"Of course he must stay," Aunt Maranda turned and said, as she and Nina went on into the dining-room.

"How do you think she is going to stand it, doctor?" Arthur said, after Nina had left the room.

"I can hardly tell," he said. "She hasn't a very robust constitution—is nervous and high-strung. I fear the shock to her nervous system.

You had best just take her off from the rest of us and quietly tell her all about it before they come."

"I will," said Arthur; "and you must not leave the house, doctor."

After they had finished breakfast, Aunt Maranda took the doctor out to show him her flowers, and Arthur Everton followed Nina into the parlor, where she remembered having left her hat the previous evening.

"Does my little girl feel better?" he said.

"Yes, indeed," said Nina. "I can't tell why I cried so. I just felt as if some great trouble was coming."

"Nina, may be a great joy. Sit down and let me tell you about it."

Her eyes brightened as she looked up at him and said: "What can it be? I wish I could hear from my dear papa. I wonder if he has forgotten me."

"No, my child," said Arthur, "he has not, nor has your mother. In the near future they will both return to you and claim you as their long-lost child."

"Oh, Mr. Arthur! what do you mean? Are you insane? You know my mother has been dead three years."

"Nina, child," he said, "it was all a terrible

mistake. Your mother is not dead. She and your father will be here at ten o'clock this morning. Do not get excited. Listen to me quietly and I'll tell you all about it. Your mother was getting well, and was preparing to come home, when, through a designing enemy of your father's, a man in Europe, whom your father had offended, your father and mother were arrested and sent as exiles to Angel Island. The scoundrel then wrote to your uncle that your mother was dead, and that your father had requested him to write and tell her brother; also that your father would not return to this country for a long time, perhaps never, as he could not bear to come back without your mother. Then it was you were sent to Mexico. Your mother had inherited property, which, if she died without children, was to go to your uncle. I suspected something of this kind when I found they were forcing you to sign those papers in Mexico. Not long ago I set about investigating the matter, and quite recently discovered, through your father's lawyer, that your mother was still living; that she and your father had returned to this country, and to their horror and sorrow had found their child gone, and that they had then gone to San Francisco to make their home. I

wrote to them immediately, and yesterday received this reply from your father."

Arthur took a letter from his pocket and read:

Dear Mr. Everton:

It is with astonishment and joy that I read your letter. Our child that was lost is found! My wife is almost overcome with her great happiness at hearing this welcome news.

Tell our little daughter her long-lost father and mother will soon be with her. We start at once, and will arrive next Thursday morning, between seven and eight o'clock.

With more gratitude to you, sir, than is in my power to express, I am Most truly yours,

EDWIN W. BOISE.

Nina looked at the letter. It all seemed like a dream. It was impossible for her to realize that what Arthur Everton had been telling her was really true. But there was the letter in her father's handwriting.

"This letter came yesterday," said Arthur, "and a telegram came this morning, saying they had missed connection and would not arrive until ten. They will be here in fifteen minutes now," he said, looking at his watch and then at Nina, who had risen from her chair.

"In fifteen minutes!" she repeated. "Oh, God! oh, God! Is it really true? Is my mamma really alive?"

"Mamma!" she said, laughing softly; then with tears in her eyes she looked at Arthur, and said: "Oh, it can not be true!"

Her face, which had been flushed, grew very white. He thought she was going to fall, but caught her and helped her to the sofa. She did not lose consciousness, however.

A carriage drove up, and presently some people were coming in. Who is this lovely lady with her angel face, and this gentleman, that Aunt Maranda and the doctor are escorting in?

When the two, mother and daughter, saw each other, they rushed together, and threw their arms around each other. The tears flowed like April rains. The mother's only words were: "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!"

There was not a dry eye in the room.

Nina was so overcome that she could not speak. The shock completely prostrated her. But joy does not kill.

That dear mother and father and all the rest of the household watched her tenderly until she was herself again. The mother could not let her child be out of her sight a moment.

Arthur Everton thought, as he watched that mother, that he beheld woman in her loveliest aspect. Gentle and self-contained as she was, her

every breath was one of sympathy for her child. She would smooth the pillow, rub the aching head with her cool hand, and send up earnest prayer to God for the speedy recovery of her child, the child who was overcome with great happiness, with pure love for her parents.

Happy, indeed, were that father and mother when their child, restored to them almost miraculously, was herself again. Their hearts were full of unspeakable gratitude to God. They felt as if they had nothing else in this world to wish for.

"Mamma"—it gave Nina such a thrill of joy to say it, she could not repeat it often enough—"Mamma," she said, "you told me my prayers would be answered if I prayed in earnest, and now, thanks be to God, they have been answered!"

CHAPTER XV.

"'Tis thus that life's vanished moments are spent,
And, ere we're aware, with eternity blent;
No longer we find them, no longer they're ours,
But are gone from our sight, like the child's wasted
flowers."

Thomas St. Clair, Nina's uncle, lay dangerously ill. Word had been sent to his sister that if she and Nina wished to see him again, they must come at once.

When they arrived they found that Mrs. St. Clair and Janetta had been watching all night, fearful that at any moment "Uncle Thomas" might pass away. The doctor had sent them to the next room to rest, saying he would call them if it was necessary. Mrs. Boise and Nina were to come right up, and the doctor said he would not leave.

Mr. St. Clair had lain quiet for some time, but suddenly roused up and looked at the doctor with a pained expression on his face. The doctor asked him if he was suffering.

"Oh, doctor!" he said, "I am wretched and filled with remorse for my sins! Like Lord Chesterfield, I have been as wicked and as vain, though

not as wise as Solomon! I feel the truth of his reflection, 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit!' Goethe declared at the age of eighty-four, when the light of time was going out and the loadstars of eternity were beginning to open on his vision, that he had scarcely tasted twenty-four hours' solid happiness in the whole course of his life! But I am more wretched than he! I die as Voltaire, without hope. Oh, give me an opium to deaden the terrible forebodings of coming woe! Would that I could say, like Lord Byron, 'I have fought a good fight and am ready to be offered up'! But, alas, I leap into darkness weighted down with a heinous sin! I had the gypsies kidnap my sister's child! - the child she left to me for safekeeping in her absence! If either of us died without children, the other was to have all of my father's estate. I gave the gypsies a thousand dollars to take away my sister's child because I wanted her inheritance as well as my own! That sister's look when she came back — and found — her child gone has haunted me ever since! 'Oh, where is my darling child, the child I left with you, brother Thomas?' she said. 'God help me find her!' My conscience told me, then, to have her child brought back, and ask her forgiveness; but, 'No, no,' the devil said; 'hold out; don't give in,' and I listened to the devil! I am ashamed to look in their faces even on my deathbed! I repent from the bottom of my soul, but, oh, too late, too late! They can never forgive me now!"

"Uncle Thomas," said Nina, going to him and taking his hand, "we have forgiven you. Ask God to."

"Yes," said Mrs. Boise, coming quietly to his bedside, "we forgive you all, brother, but only *Christ* can take away your sin. Oh, pray to him!"

"Sister, it is too late. I call, and he hears me not! You can not know the misery of your wretched brother — the brother that did you such a wicked wrong!"

"Thomas, my brother, don't waste your little strength in bewailing your sins, but spend it in prayer to God for forgiveness," said Mrs. Boise. "Ask him to take away your sin and clothe you with his righteousness. Nina is happy now, and so am I. God restored us to each other. It is true we suffered, but it was for some wise purpose. If he had not permitted it, you could not have sent my child away, any more than you could keep us apart when he willed we should be restored to each other! Can not you see how small and weak all our independent acts are in his sight? He is great and good and all powerful. Trust him. He is

able to save to the uttermost those who call upon him in faith! You've not known God truly, or you wouldn't have gone so far from him. He is perfect in wisdom and justice, but he is also a merciful God. He is Love itself! His love far excelleth the love of sister, brother, wife or mother. It is love so deep, so high, so broad, that the blackest wretch who ever lived may know its saving power, if he will. The person of Jesus Christ personified this mighty love on earth. Once, for all time, he suffered the misery of our sin, that we might go to God with hearts washed clean by the agency of the Only Righteous One. Will you not accept with your heart and confess with your mouth this Redeemer of God's elect? - Oh, Lord Jesus," she prayed, "reveal thyself to my poor, sinful brother before it is too late. Cleanse his heart and open his eyes, that through faith he may see thee in thy beauty!"

"Oh, God, I am the chief of sinners, but for Christ the Redeemer's sake, save me!" prayed Uncle Thomas.

"Read something from God's Word, Nina, child," said Mrs. Boise.

Nina turned to the twenty-third Psalm, the psalm she remembered reading when the first real

trouble she had ever known came upon her. With what a different feeling now she read:

"'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

The doctor called Mrs. St. Clair and Janetta, for he saw that the end was drawing near.

Going silently to his bedside, they kissed the husband and father farewell forever. His eyes were closed, but a sweet smile had come to his face, which only left it when the breath left his suffering body and his spirit returned to God, who gave it.

The next day, late in the afternoon, his "earthly tabernacle" was laid to rest.

When they returned to the house after the funeral, Mrs. Boise urged the bereaved wife and daughter to go home with her, and henceforth be of her household. They, however, declined. Mrs. St. Clair had not forgotten her unkind treatment of Nina, and Nina's and her mother's goodness to her now was beyond anything she could understand. It humbled her to the very dust. She realized they had something in their hearts and

lives that she had missed. Nevertheless, softened and completely won over as she was, and though she felt utterly alone and wretched, she could not bring herself to accept any more than she was obliged to from them.

She knew that it was through her influence mainly that her husband had sent Nina away, and then deceived his sister when the sister returned for her child.

"How dreadfully am I punished!" she thought.

"My husband stricken down in the full strength of his manhood, and I left alone—alone!"

With all her pride and wickedness, she had cared more for him than for anything else in the world, and now, thinking how quickly the years had flown and how little she had got out of them, her eyes were opened to see her own selfishness, and she could not help realizing that "the race of the wicked is not long."

Sad this is for the wicked, but true enough. How many have supped from sorrow's cup for mistreating and misjudging the innocent!

The day following the funeral Nina and her mother returned home. As they said "Good-by," all felt that sorrow had brought their hearts closer together, at least for the time being, than they had ever been before.

Janetta saw them off, and after they had gone found herself walking toward the cemetery. The sun was low, leaning upon the purple crest of a distant hill; its yellow light flashed over the forest of marble pillars, and their cold, polished surface gave back the warming glare, as if sunshine were a mockery in the silent city of the dead. Somber, sacred, guardian cedars extended their branches over the resting places of both the young and old sleepers in "God's acre."

"There sleep two generations of our family," thought Janetta, as she walked slowly on, after looking at the moss-covered mausoleum; "now the crowded lot has room for only two more narrow beds — mother's and mine."

She felt as if she cared not how soon she was laid away in hers.

Thus it ever is when the first great bereavement comes upon one. The uncertainty of life and the certainty of death make everything seem unreal and not worth while.

It is only after we are taught of God's Spirit, through life's experiences, of both joy and sorrow, that we can realize in any degree the real meaning of our life on earth—that it is a beginning, a school, a preparation for the larger life beyond.

After we have learned this we can truly live —

live with a large and growing faith in God's omnipotence and love, and in the saving power of Christ, the God-man.

A deeper, purer, stronger love comes into our hearts for those about us. Our souls feel closer to theirs, because we know theirs, as well as ours, are bound to God.

We may falter and fail, but we recover and go on, for our hope is eternal, and the joy of living — of growing in heart, mind and soul — fills our being. Thus we learn to know what a glorious thing life is, even in its crude beginning, on this earth!

Oh, what shall it be hereafter, "when that which is perfect is come," and "that which is imperfect shall be done away"!

CHAPTER XVI.

"I wish that friends were always true, And motives always pure;

I wish the good were not so few, I wish the bad were fewer;

I wish that persons ne'er forgot To heed their pious teachings;

I wish that practicing were not So different from preaching."

—J. G. S.

A happy year had passed, which Nina and her parents, with an occasional visit from Miss Kaughman or Mr. Everton, had spent in Lexington, so that Nina might go on with her studies in Hamilton College. The sad, pathetic expression which her lovely face had worn so long was gone, and in its place was a bright, contented look. The joy of again having her precious mother always near, and of feeling the protecting care of her dear father, filled her heart. More beautiful than ever, she was just becoming as healthy and happyhearted as God intended all his young creatures should be.

Mr. and Mrs. Boise could not do enough for the daughter that had been so miraculously restored to them; but no matter how much kindness and attention was lavished upon her, Nina could never

become spoiled or selfish. The sorrow she had herself been through made her keen to detect signs of suffering in others. Her beautiful young presence shed joy and brightness wherever she went, and she was never so happy as when looking after some creature who needed sympathy or help.

Full of energy and unusually capable for a girl of sixteen, she always had her hands and heart full, and no small part of her time was devoted to ministering to the wants of the unfortunate.

It was now summer again. Mr. and Mrs. Boise and Nina had gone to the country, the sweet country of Kentucky, where flowers bloom and birds sing as they do nowhere else on earth.

One beautiful morning, as Mr. Boise was standing on the front porch, Nina's horse was brought out for her to ride. She soon appeared, attired in her tasteful dark blue habit. Her father's face brightened with pride and affection as he assisted his lovely young daughter to mount her horse.

"Where are you going this morning, my daughter?" he said.

"Oh, papa!" she answered, merrily, "I'm going to see a wounded knight!"

He looked at her with an inquiring smile.

"No," she said, "joking aside; I am going to see a poor boy, who is anything but a knight, I'm afraid. He was stealing a ride on that train that was wrecked by robbers yesterday. In firing at them they mistook this boy, who was a tramp, for one of them, and wounded him so badly that he won't probably recover. Aunt Jane told me about him. He is in a cabin, several miles down the pike, near the railroad, and except for two old people who are very poor, there is no one to see to him. He is somebody's child—somebody's brother, and may be I can do something for him. Anyway I'm going to see!"

"Well, return and let me know about him, Nina. I don't like to have you go on such errands alone. If you aren't home in a little while, I'll send after you, or hunt you up myself," her father said.

"Very well, papa; but there isn't a bit of danger. I know almost everybody around here, and they'll do most anything for me. Good-by; I'm off."

She turned and threw him a kiss as she went down the driveway.

"What sunshine I have in that child!" Mr. Boise said, as he went into the house.

Nina soon found the house to which the wounded boy had been taken. He lay so still and looked so pale she thought he must have fainted,

"Good morning, young man. How are you?" she said.

"I — I am some easier, kind Miss. Who are you?" he answered, looking at her wonderingly.

"I am Miss Boise, and am staying near here for the summer. I heard of your being hurt, and came to see what I could do for you," she said kindly. "Have you any friends? Where are you from?"

"Well, Miss, I am a soldier; ran away from home when a child, and my people haven't ever got a trace of me since. A prodigal indeed, I've been, and was going home to see my old mother, who, if she's living, has passed her seventieth birthday, and my sister. But fate's against me; I'm afraid I'll not get there alive! My name is James Overstreet."

"Have you had a doctor?" asked Nina.

"No, ma'am. A man went after one for me, but he asked if I had any money. The man said he reckoned not, so the doctor wouldn't come."

The boy's voice grew weak, and he seemed exhausted by the effort he had made in talking,

Nina went and got a basket she had brought with her, containing things she thought might be needed. She bathed his face and fed him, then went to call the old man and woman. She had seen them in a potato patch near by, and the woman had directed her where to find the wounded boy. She employed them to look after him.

"I will see that the doctor comes," said Nina; "and I'll send ice, and enough for you all to eat."

"Is he anything to you, Nina?" asked the woman.

"Yes," said Nina; "he is my brother."

"Your brother!" said the old woman, in astonishment.

"Yes. God is the Father of us all. I have never seen this young man, nor heard of him, but he is somebody's child, and it's our duty to give help when it's needed," Nina said. "What clothes has he?"

"Only what he has on, an' that hickory shirt is the ole man's," the woman said. "His'n was so bloody I let him have that till his'n was washed."

"Well, I'll send some clothes and bed linen for him," said Nina.

She put the "dipping gourd" to his lips, shook out his pillow, then bade him "Good-by," and was gone.

She soon rode up to the doctor's office.

"John, is the doctor in?" she said, as the doctor's man opened the door in answer to her knock.

"Yes, ma'am," John replied.

"Hold my horse, please. I want to see him," said Nina.

The doctor was sitting back in his chair smoking. He got up with a smile when he saw Nina coming in, and said: "Well, bless me, if here isn't my little Nina! Sit down; sit down. I'm glad to see you, though you're in trouble, of course. What's the matter this time? Some old negro got rheumatism? or has some poor old body hurt her foot? or may be the 'mad god' has bit the dog!"

"No, doctor, none of these catastrophes, but I have come to ask a favor, as usual," said Nina, taking a chair. "I want you to go to see a poor boy who was shot in that railroad wreck. He is down on the pike at old man Wood's cabin. Then there's a typhoid fever case in a small house just beyond there, in the way of a little girl. I wish you would visit her also. See that both of these sick people want for nothing, and sends the bills to me. I'll stop at the store and have some things sent out, on my way home."

"'To hear is to obey,' Miss Nina. But, my child," said the doctor, "you must not go there any more. That fever is contagious, and besides you ought not to go to those people. They are a low class, and poor is no name!"

"Yes, 'tis true they are poor, and I suppose

low," Nina replied; "but nevertheless they have souls, just as you and I have! Doctor, I hope you are not like the world, and judge people by their clothes and earthly goods. That's no way to do. You are a doctor, and your business is to cure, and even if they are not much more than paupers, six feet of earth makes us all of a size at last! 'The soul is the only thing!' as some wise one said. I was reading some truths eloquent with beauty on this subject not long ago. 'There are beautiful creations all around us that manifest the wisdom of God, but he has made nothing so glorious as the human soul,' the author said. 'The morning star shines with a perishable luster, the sea with all its strength shall roll together as a vapor and pass away, but a pure, righteous and loving soul has in it the likeness of God, and shall survive all outward and material things. We may trace this fact in the clear distinction seen between the man and his works. What a discrepancy there is between the creations and the capacity—between the word that breaks upon the lips and the inexhaustible thought that gushes within! What is the finest masterpiece of art, to the artist's ideal? What is the loftiest reach of discovery, to the earnest aspiration that stretches out for more? Music, sculpture, painting - these are glorious

works; but the soul that creates them is more glorious than they! The music shall die on the passing wind — the poem may be lost in the confusion of tongues — the marble will crumble and the canvas will fade; while the soul shall be quenchless and strong — filled with a nobler melody, kindling with loftier themes, projecting images of unearthly beauty,— and drinking from the spring of imperishable life! There, doctor," she concluded, "what do you think of my sermon?"

"It's fine, Miss; but you are ready for another world. I am not."

'No, no, doctor, I'm not. I am just beginning to find my work in this one, and I have so much to thank God for. I feel the only way to show my appreciation of his goodness to me, is to assist his creatures whenever I have an opportunity. You know what the Bible says about 'showing your faith by your works.' My works are small and few,—but, doctor, your skill must supplement them."

Nina got up to go. The doctor accompanied her to the door, promising to do all she asked, but still insisting that she ought to find "work" that did not endanger her own health.

On the way home she met her father coming to look for her. She told him what she had done.

He smiled approvingly, telling her to call on him for help when she needed it for any of her "charity cases," as he called them. He said that, out of the abundance with which God had blessed him, it was a pleasure and privilege to help her relieve the suffering of the unfortunate.

The next day, about noon, a boy came for Nina, saying he had been sent to tell her the young man, James Overstreet, was dying, and wanted to see her. She lost no time in going to him, and found that his life was fast ebbing away. The doctor had relieved his suffering, but could not save him. He lay propped up on pillows, pale and emaciated, and so still that she thought he was already dead; but as she came near, he opened his eyes, and his face brightened as he said: "Miss Boise, I wish to thank you for your kindness to me. I am grateful to you not only for your gifts, but for the sweet peace you brought to my soul when you first came to see me. After I'm gone, I want my body sent, please, to my sister, Mrs. Knight, in Louisville."

"Mrs. Knight? Oh, I know that lady!" Nina exclaimed. "She was the one who took me with her the day I left my mother, nearly five years ago!— and is there anything you wish me to tell her, James?"

"No, nothing. Won't you sing to me of heaven, Miss Boise?"

Nina sang, and as she did so the poor boy's soul floated away on the wings of eternal song. The following day his remains were sent to his sister. He was dressed as a gentleman, and his casket was the best Nina's father could find. A kind and loving letter from Nina read as follows:

CLEAVE HILL, KY., June 15th.

My Dear Mrs. Knight:

It is with a sad heart I send the remains of your long-lost brother to you. Little did any of us think, when you called for me that day, and let me go with you to K—, that I could ever return the kindness in any way; but we little know how things will turn out in this world.

I was with your brother when he died, and did all I could for him. His body is now out of pain, and his soul is in heaven.

The doctor will write you at once, and tell you more particularly about his illness and death.

Asking to be remembered to your daughter, not forgetting yourself, and sorrowing with you in your sorrow, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

NINA BOISE.

The doctor's letter reached Mrs. Knight first, but she had scarcely finished reading it when her brother's remains and Nina's letter came to her.

She was filled with grief and remorse of conscience. She vividly remembered the little grief-stricken child leaving her mother. She also remembered how harshly she had treated her, thinking her a bother and trouble because she sobbed and cried.

"To think that it should fall to that child's lot to do this great kindness for me," she said to her daughter. "I remember she said it might be she could repay me some day, and I remember my answer to that heart-broken child,—'Nonsense, what can you ever do for me,' was my ungracious reply. How I wish I'd been more patient with her and treated her more kindly. I must tell her how I thank her for what she's done for me, and how sorry I am that I did not show her more consideration. The doctor said in his letter, that my brother was only a tramp, with absolutely nothing, and she supplied all his wants! This will teach me a lesson long to be remembered."

After her brother's body was laid away in its last resting-place, Mrs. Knight wrote Nina a letter full of sweet and tender feeling—a letter Nina could hardly believe was from the cold-hearted, disagreeable woman who had had charge of her on that memorable journey.

Mrs. Knight had indeed changed in many ways; but her daughter Emma was still selfish and stubborn, and when her mother asked her to send some message to Nina, would not.

"Mother," she said, "that girl was a great bother. Don't you remember how she sobbed and bleated? Such a little 'goody-good' as she was, too. Don't worry me about her. Your brother was nothing but a poor tramp — what did he want to live for? There is no need for you to mope and go on so. It doesn't help matters any. I think it's silly. I don't intend to follow up trouble that way!"

"My daughter," said her mother, "we don't have to follow trouble up. It will come without our looking for it."

"Oh, mamma, you're getting poky yourself since you've taken to praying and reading the Bible. No doubt, that Nina Boise spends all her time that way. As for me, I don't even know the Lord's Prayer."

"Oh, Emma, do learn it, or you'll have something to turn you to it," Mrs. Knight said earnestly.

"Well, I'll not worry till it comes," Emma replied, airily,—a speech she deeply repented at no distant time.

Less than two months had passed when Nina received from Emma Knight the following letter:

My Dear Miss Boise:

I feel that I must write to you, asking your sympathy and prayers. Sadly and tearfully we walk through the grass-grown paths from the graveyard, my mother holding my hand. I look at her marble-like face. I never saw features so white, so sad.

Alas! I have no father now.

All will ever be fresh before my mind—the day he told us he was not well, and how, at the close of that day, I saw him faint upon mother's bed—the hour when they said he was worse, and how my heart stopped beating at the thought of what might be! I could not think my father, with his piercing black eyes and raven hair,—my father with his straight, magnificent person, with all his wealth, and with his big, kind heart, could die!

I stood by his bedside, and heard him in a faint voice tell them to place his hand upon my head,—that cold hand, which as it lay upon my head chilled me to the heart. And then I saw him die. I went in and out of the death chamber. I followed the casket to the last resting-place. When I returned I thought I should die. I threw myself on his bed, and called "Father, father! come back to me!" Then, when I grew calmer, I opened the Bible where he had last read, and greedily my eyes fastened upon the words, "Our Father, which art in heaven." How they struck me - how they filled me with wonder. The book fell from my hands. I saw for the first time what was meant by "Our Father," - my Father, my heavenly Father. All the sweetness of my dead father seemed unfolded, and ten-fold magnified as I felt my heavenly Father's love and pity pour upon me. I ran to my mother and sobbed out in my joy that I'd found a Father!

And now my heart goes out to you. I ask you to forgive me the sinful feeling I've held toward you — you whom I have just begun to understand. May God be with us all. I am, from henceforth,

Lovingly and earnestly yours, Emma Knight.

Nina was deeply touched by this letter. She had never seen Mr. Knight, but remembered hearing her father say what a splendid man he was;

how trustworthy, how generous, how kind-hearted; and now God had taken him; and Emma Knight as well as her mother had been turned to heavenly things.

"Oh," said Nina, to her mother, "we ought never to hold ill-will toward those who do not treat us as we'd have them, for in the end, when they come to their true selves, they may become our best friends."

She laid the letter away among other treasured ones she possessed, and thanked God that she had another true friend, and that that friend had started on the road which leads to eternal happiness.

CHAPTER XVII.

The same mail which brought Emma Knight's letter to Nina brought another and a very different letter from Emma Lee Tucker, which read:

PINE GROVE, August 10th.

My Dear Nina:

I have great news for you. I am going to make you a visit! That is, I am writing now to see if it will be convenient for your mother to have me. I am just dying to see you, and it's so hot and horrid here, I can't stand it any longer. I tried to persuade Aunt to take me to the seashore, but she said she was away in the spring and wouldn't leave Uncle Tucker again this summer, and hewell, I don't believe you could get him off his plantation to go to my funeral! Anyhow, he said the cotton would soon need his attention, so to expect him to take me anywhere was out of the question. I was getting desperate when I remembered that your father had taken a house in the country for the summer, and the happy thought struck me: I might go to see you. Just think, Nina, only a month left before we have to go back to school! But I can't stand even a month more, down here, for more reasons than one. I've just had a big fuss with my last "devoted," Morris Berkley, and Uncle Tucker ordered him off the place! He seems terribly "cut up," but I don't care much, for I never would have had him anyway. He hasn't style enough, and is altogether too tame for me! Ah, me! he's been right nice though, and I suppose I'll miss his attentions.

Aunt seemed mightily pleased when I told her I was going to ask you to let me visit you. She took a great fancy to you when she saw you at "Hamilton" last

spring; said she wished I'd always show such good taste in the friends I made. Say, Nina, what become of that handsome Mr. Everton that used to come from Cincinnati to see you? But you can tell me all about him when I see you. Just write me a short little note, quick, and tell me whether I can come to you or not.

Oh, you should see my lovely new gowns! Such beauties as they are. I'd tell you about them, but must get this in the next mail.

Give my kindest regards to your mother and father, and hoping to see you very soon, I am,

Your true friend, EMMA LEE.

"Well, mamma dear," said Nina, "shall I write Emma Lee to come?"

"Certainly, my dear, if you'd like to have her," replied her mother. "It must be very warm as far South as she lives. Let me see, Emma Lee was the handsome dark-haired girl who came home with you to tea, sometimes, last winter, wasn't she?"

"Yes," said Nina. "Don't you remember my telling you, mamma, she was my room-mate the first year I went to Hamilton College. She was very kind to me in some ways, and kept me from feeling lonely when things were new and strange to me."

"Yes, yes, dear, I remember all you said about her. Well, tell her we shall be glad to have her come. She seemed to be a pleasant-mannered girl. Isn't she older than you are, Nina?" "Oh, yes, nearly two years; but in some branches we recited in the same classes. Emma Lee is very bright, but she won't study any more than she is obliged to. She is not fond of books."

"I'm glad you are, Nina. A girl who forms a liking for good books need never be lonely or discontented."

In due time Emma Lee arrived, and with her handsome face, vivacious personality and pretty, stylish clothes, made an agreeable impression on all who met her.

Mrs. Boise in the course of time saw traits that indicated she was a very much spoiled young lady; but Emma Lee had many attractive ways, and soon became a favorite among the young people of the vicinity, who flocked to see Miss Boise's guest. They made much of both her and Nina, inviting them to their houses, getting up picnics, taking long country rides, and having the "good times" generally which the young and lighthearted ever enjoy.

Emma Lee, though scarcely nineteen, was quite an accomplished coquette, and soon a number of the young men were very much in love with her.

While they admired Nina, and the favored ones delighted in her friendship, there was something in the childish innocence of her face and a certain dignity of soul that her personality was possessed of, which forbade any sort of familiarity. As for flirting with her, they would as soon have thought of coquetting with a guardian angel!

Late one afternoon the two girls sat chatting, under the trees, on the front lawn. They had been invited to a gathering of young people that evening, some miles distant, and as they expected to start immediately after tea, were already dressed for the festivity.

Emma Lee wore a beautiful gown of some soft, filmy, pink material, which set off her rich Southern beauty as no other color could. Gems glistened at her throat and belt, not more brilliant, however, than did her bright black eyes beneath their straight, dark brows.

Nina was in gauzy white, relieved by ribbons of turquoise blue. Her lovely hair was fastened back in a full loose knot, though a few wayward curls would escape, and it seemed as if their soft, curved strands of rich gold color were the last touches that could possibly be added to her exquisite beauty.

All unconscious that she, herself, looked like a fairy princess from a story-book, Nina sat on a straight-backed settee gazing admiringly at the radiant beauty of Emma Lee, who, half reclining against numerous bright pillows, swung in a hammock near by.

A truly beautiful picture the two girls made.

- "So Mr. Everton is coming, before tea, this evening," said Emma Lee. "Do you think he'll go with us to the Brandons to-night?"
 - "I don't know," said Nina; "I hope so."
 - "Are you in love with him, Nina?"
- "Emma Lee! what a question to ask me. Mr. Everton has known me for years, and still regards me as a little girl."
- "You're almost seventeen. I had been engaged twice when I was seventeen!" said Emma Lee.
- "Why, Emma Lee! Well, I don't know how it is with other girls, but I could never become engaged to any man I did not intend to marry," said Nina.
- "Oh, goodness, you can't marry them all, and it's only after you're engaged that you find out whether you really want a man or not generally not! With all my 'affairs,' I have never been really and truly in love yet enough in love to marry a man, I mean. But, my, when I am "— she sat up straight and her eyes flashed as she said it —" I'll stop at nothing to get the man I want! I

reckon, though, I won't have much trouble," she added, as she leaned lazily back again in her hammock.

"Dear me," said Nina, "I could never give my heart to a man unless I was perfectly sure he loved me above all others, and wanted it."

"Oh, a man always loves the girl he thinks loves him the most—that is, if she is passably good-looking!" said Emma Lee.

"Not always," said Nina, "for there's Mr. Everton, who has been in love with Miss Kaughman for years, and Aunt Maranda says she is in love with some one else!"

"Who is 'Aunt Maranda'? and who is 'Miss Kaughman'? and how do you know Mr. Everton is in love with her?" asked Emma Lee.

"You met Miss Kaughman, Emma Lee, last winter, at our house. Don't you remember her? She is not very tall and has lovely brown eyes," Nina replied.

"Oh, that old maid — why, she is twenty-eight, if she's a day. I don't believe Mr. Everton is in love with her," exclaimed the eighteen-year-old beauty.

"Old maid, indeed! She's not an 'old maid,'" said Nina, with some spirit; "she's my dearest

friend. Next to my mother, I love her more than any woman on earth."

"Well, I beg your pardon, I'm sure. No doubt she is charming; but, really, the idea of Mr. Everton being in love with her is absurd. She is too old for him; now, isn't she?" said Emma Lee.

"She is only a year older than he is," replied Nina.

"Oh, well, he'll marry a younger person — you see if he doesn't!" Emma Lee said, with more meaning, perhaps, than Nina comprehended.

"Oh! there goes my little typhoid fever girl," exclaimed Nina, waving her hand and smiling brightly at a child who was passing on the road at the end of the lawn. "She has been sick in bed all summer — has just got strong enough to go about.— Help yourself to some flowers, dear," Nina called out, as the child smiled at her, then looked longingly at a tall althea bush in full bloom near the gate.

"Did your shoes fit?" Nina asked her. "How did you like the jelly I sent?"

The child looked down at her feet, then bashfully toward Nina.

"Mighty good! Thank'ee, ma'am," she answered, shily turning to pick the flowers before continuing on her way.

"I wonder which is 'mighty good'—the jelly or the shoes?" said Emma Lee, laughing, as the little girl, made happy by the flowers, went on down the road. "Nina," she continued, "you certainly have a raft of the poor and decrepit hanging on to you. I don't see how you find time to look after them."

"Why, I have nothing else to do," said Nina; "not a thing else in the world. I can look after them easily and still have plenty of time left for myself."

The gate clicked. They looked up, and there was Mr. Everton coming toward them with two oblong paper boxes. He lifted his hat and smiled. Nina jumped up and ran toward him.

"How's my little 'sister'?" he said, taking her hand with his free one.

"Oh, so well, and so glad to see you," said Nina. "You remember my school friend, Miss Emma Lee Tucker, Mr. Everton?"

"Indeed I have not forgotten her," he said; and as Emma Lee smilingly replied, "I'm delighted to see you again, Mr. Everton," he laid one of the boxes in her lap. The other he handed to Nina.

Emma Lee moved over and obligingly put a pillow in the other end of the hammock; but Mr.

Everton's eyes were on Nina, and he presently sat beside her on the settee.

"I should say you hadn't forgotten either of us," said Nina, as she opened her box and brought to view a mass of beautiful long-stemmed white lilies. "Thank you so much, Mr. Arthur."

Both she and he wondered if the other remembered the lily she had once given him, and both smiled at the thought.

Emma Lee's box contained gorgeous pink carnations.

"How perfectly grand of you!" said Emma Lee,—"just what we both wanted for this evening. Of course you're going with us to the Brandons, Mr. Everton?"

Before he had time to reply the tea-bell rang, and they arose and started toward the house.

"I hope to have that pleasure, Miss Tucker," Mr. Everton replied. "By the way, quite a noted musician, whom I happen to know, is to be there, I hear."

"In that case, you'll surely enjoy yourself, Nina," said Emma Lee to her, as Mr. and Mrs. Boise were welcoming Mr. Everton. "You are so fond of music."

"Music or no music, I could not help enjoying myself where Mr. Arthur is!" said Nina impulsively.

"What's that you said, little girl," he asked, turning to her before sitting down to the table.

"Oh, she said you would make me enjoy myself to-night at the Brandons," Emma Lee said quickly, while Nina hesitated and blushed.

"I don't imagine there will be any question in regard to your enjoying yourself, Miss Tucker," he replied with a smile.

And there wasn't. She had not been at the Brandons fifteen minutes before she was surrounded by young men who vied with each other in their efforts to get a smile, a word, or even a glance from the "Southern belle."

After a while, however, she decided in her own mind that she would be much happier in a shaded corner of the porch with Mr. Everton making love to her. She was casting about in her mind how she could bring this desirable state of things to pass when, there being a lull in the conversation, Nina was urged to sing.

She sang some old-time ballads that her father loved. She was indeed very fond of music, and her feelings, either sad or joyous, frequently found expression in poetry or song. A poem that appealed to her she rarely forgot, and to sing when her heart was full was as natural as to breathe.

The musician who was present listened to her

pure, pliant voice, so clear, so true, so full of expression, with growing delight. He came and took her hand, almost reverently, when she had finished, and asked her where she had studied. He told her she had a precious gift in her voice, and ought to do all she could to enhance its strength and beauty.

Later, when the musician played, oh, so beautifully, some of the divine compositions of the great masters, Nina listened with her soul in her eyes and a rapt expression of countenance, as if she were lifted out of and beyond herself. Arthur Everton watched Nina's face.

"She is a divine poem herself," he thought—
"an exquisite song."

The following day, the musician saw Nina's father, and talked to him very enthusiastically in regard to her voice.

"Mr. Boise," he said, "your daughter's voice is wonderful in many respects. I have been accustomed to hearing singing, good singing, all my life, and rarely, never in one so young and who'd had so little instruction, have I heard a voice so true, so pure, so flexible as hers. You should send her abroad to have it trained and strengthened by one of the great teachers."

"Well," said Mr. Boise, "I knew that my

daughter had a good voice — one that pleased me — but had no idea it was so unusual a voice as you seem to think. I had thought, however, of having her go abroad for a year or two, when she gets through school, to study music and perfect herself in modern languages. She is young yet, and has plenty of time."

"Oh, my dear sir, now, while her mind is still young and impressionable, is the time for her to study music. Youth is the time to learn music as well as anything else. Maturity can but intensify and strengthen what is learned in youth. Don't, I pray you, postpone very long sending her to some great teacher of voice in Paris, Germany or Italy."

"Well, I'll talk it over with her mother," said Mr. Boise. "I certainly thank you, sir, for your kindly interest in my daughter's talent and for calling my attention to it."

"Ah, sir, such a voice, such a voice as she has! I could not help it," the musician said, as he shook Mr. Boise's hand and prepared to take his leave.

Mr. Everton stayed with the Boises several days. He showed Emma Lee much kindness and attention. She could not but feel, however, that it was only because she was Nina's guest that he felt more than a passing interest in her. Young

ladies like Emma Lee were no novelty to Arthur Everton. He had been thrown much with society girls, and had known many different kinds. Some he had found, who were sweet and generoushearted, while the fine manners of others were simply a veneer which covered their vanity and selfishness.

As for Nina, she was his ideal of what a girl should be. All his hopes for the future centered around her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

When autumn came, Mr. and Mrs. Boise decided not to postpone longer having Nina go abroad to study, but to take her at once to Paris, where she could have every musical advantage, and at the same time continue her other studies.

Emma Lee wanted very much to go with Nina, and begged her aunt and uncle to send her to Europe also. She had always had her own way, and they finally yielded to her in this as in everything else, thankful that she had chosen such desirable friends as the Boises.

Mrs. Tucker wrote to Mrs. Boise, asking, as a great favor, that Emma Lee might be of her party. Mrs. Boise hesitated about assuming the responsibility for so long a time, of a girl like Emma Lee, but was finally persuaded, against her better judgment, to do so.

Mr. Everton and "Aunt Maranda" were also going, but expected to return in two months. Mr. Everton had business in Europe, and had invited Aunt Maranda to take the trip with him.

At the last moment, after passages had been secured and all were in New York expecting to

start in a few days, Mr. Boise found that, on account of business complications which had arisen, he could not start for a month or six weeks. All were in a quandary as to what to do.

"Well," said Aunt Maranda to Mr. and Mrs. Boise, "if you would trust the girls to our care, Arthur and I could take them across, and I'd be glad to look after them for a few weeks until you could come."

"Thank you," said Mr. Boise; "that is very kind. I should insist on Mrs. Boise going with you, but, although she is much stronger than she used to be, she is far from being in perfect health, and I think it would be wiser for her to wait until I can go, to look after her comfort. As for Nina and Miss Emma Lee, there is no reason why they should not go with you. Indeed, I think it might be a very good plan. Their apartments are secured in Paris, their teachers engaged, and all arrangements made for them.— How does the plan strike you, my dear?" he asked, turning to his wife.

"I dislike being separated from Nina," she replied; "but I suppose, if we must, we can stand it for a few weeks. I couldn't think of going without you. I should feel lost.— There is no one I know in whose care I should be willing to trust my daughter, as in yours and your aunt's, Mr.

Everton," she said to Arthur; "this will only be adding another to the great favor you rendered us in years past."

"Indeed, Mrs. Boise, you must know that I am more than glad to do anything in my power to serve Miss Nina, or her parents. Aunt Maranda and I shall feel it a privilege to have the young ladies go with us."

"Well, that settles it," said Mr. Boise. "You see, Everton, a man who proves himself a good friend in one extremity is liable to be called on in another."

The day the ship was to set sail arrived, and a beautiful clear day it was. The "goodbyes" were said, and for the first time since they had been restored to each other, Nina and her mother were to be separated. But how different was this leave-taking from that other so long ago. Nina knew that this parting was but for a short time, and she was going with kind friends, whom she loved well. She and her mother clung to each other, and tears would come to their eyes, but smiles were on their faces, and each tried to be brave for the other's sake. Soon the good ship was off. Nina watched the forms of her father and mother on the shore grow smaller and smaller, as the ship got farther away. At last they looked like small specks. Then

Nina began to realize how very far away they would be. She stretched out her arms toward them, saying aloud: "Oh, I don't want to leave them! Let me go back to them!"

"The days will fly by before you know it, little girl. You will hardly get settled in Paris before your father and mother will come walking in," said Arthur Everton, who happened to be the only one who heard her.

As they got farther and farther out, the beautiful blue ocean, so vast, so grand, with its myriads of white-capped waves glistening in the sunlight, seemed more and more sublime to Nina.

"All the poets have ever said about it does not begin to express what it is!" she said, as she gazed far out to where sky and water met.

"Come on, Nina, let's go and explore our state-room," said Emma Lee; "you'll have a week to gaze at the sea, and will no doubt get your fill of it before we land."

Aunt Maranda went with the girls, and Arthur Everton proceeded to look up the Captain, intending to learn all he could concerning the things he thought the women of his party would probably soon begin to ask about.

Poor Aunt Maranda did not, for some time, get an opportunity to ask many questions. She was soon very sick, and had to go to bed, where she spent most of her time for the first few days. Nina and Emma Lee stood the ship's motion better. They shared a stateroom next to the one Aunt Maranda occupied.

"It's like old times for us to be room-mates again," said Nina to Emma Lee, looking around their comfortable stateroom.

"Yes, and if things didn't 'wabble' so, you could hardly tell but what you were in a house," said Emma Lee.

"This ship would hold dozens of houses. It's like a small city afloat," Nina said, as they went back on deck.

After supper, they watched the sun sink, like a big ball of fire, into the ocean.

"What marvelously beautiful things God has made!" exclaimed Nina, as it disappeared, leaving a strange pinkish light in the sky, which the water reflected.

"Yes, it's too bad Aunt Maranda is missing all this," said Arthur Everton.

"Let's go and see how she is, Emma Lee," said Nina.

Later in the evening, after Nina had stayed some time with Aunt Maranda, she went into her stateroom for a moment before going on deck again, and while she was there Emma Lee came in for a wrap.

"Oh, Nina!" she exclaimed, "who do you think I have met on board? No other than my old flame, Morris Berkley! I've made an engagement to walk with him. He is waiting for me now."

"I thought you had quarreled with him," said Nina.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Emma Lee; "we've both forgot about it, it's been so long ago. I don't intend to allow him to make love to me again, but a little conversation will be interesting! — I wonder what has become of Mr. Everton. Do you suppose he is seasick?"

"Oh, I hope not," Nina said.

"Well, bye-bye. See you later," Emma Lee called as she went.

Nina, too, soon went on deck. She found her steamer-chair. That part of the deck was quite deserted, but she did not mind. The beautiful silver moonlight was by this time over everything. She felt, when she looked out to sea, as if she were in an enchanted place, a phantom ship—so strange and lovely was the moonlight on the vast, vast water. It seemed as if something new and wonderful and delightful might happen at any mo-

ment. Then she began to think of her past life, with its great sorrows and great joys, and she thought that the joys had overbalanced the sorrows.

More joy, and, sad to say, more sorrow also, were in store for Nina, which she little dreamed of then.

Emma Lee had walked but a few minutes with Mr. Berkley, when she met Mr. Everton, who was wandering around looking for her and Nina. She stopped at once and introduced the two men, wishing that she could in some way get rid of Mr. Berkley, for she would have preferred walking with Arthur Everton.

"Where is Nina, Miss Emma Lee?" Mr. Everton presently asked.

"Oh, she has retired, I think," said Emma Lee; "she said she had a headache."

Mr. Everton soon excused himself, and went off to smoke a cigar. He had just thrown it away when he happened to glance over toward the part of the deck occupied by their chairs. He thought he saw a small, dark object in one of them, and went slowly in that direction to see if it was any one he knew. When he drew nearer he heard Nina's sweet, clear voice as she sang softly to herself the beautiful old song, "Lorena." He listened a few moments in silence as she sang:

"The story of the past, Lorena,
Alas, I care not to repeat;
The hopes that could not last, Lorena,
They lived, but only lived to cheat.
I would not cause one vain regret
To rankle in thy bosom now,
For 'if we try we may forget'
Were words of thine long years ago.

"It matters little now, Lorena,
The past is in the eternal past;
Our heads will soon lie low, Lorena,
Life's tide is ebbing out so fast.
There is a future! Oh, thank God,
Of life this is so small a part!
"Tis dust to dust beneath the sod,
But there, up there, 'tis heart to heart."

Mr. Everton went to the stateroom to find something in the way of a wrap, for he saw Nina was without one. He presently returned with a scarlet-lined dressing-gown and softly laid it around her shoulders.

She looked up with a smile, saying: "I did not know you were up here.— That is more comfortable, thank you."

"I did not know you were here, either," said Arthur. "Miss Emma Lee told me that you were sick and had retired.— I was surprised at your not bidding me good-night," he added, smiling at her. "Why, Emma Lee surely knew I was not going to retire!" she exclaimed.

Arthur looked down at her soft, sweet face and tender eyes.

"Nina, my dear little girl, can you imagine why I was so particularly anxious to cross the Atlantic Ocean now?" he said, drawing a chair near hers.

"Yes, Mr. Arthur, you had business," she replied.

"Yes, I have business,—business that fills my heart and mind to the exclusion of everything else, and no better time to tell it than now, Nina."

"To whom can you tell it now?— Isn't that breeze lovely? Let's stand by the railing a while," said Nina.

"To you," Arthur said, as they stepped to the railing and leaned against it —"I have some business which you can settle for me, if you will. Will you, my darling little girl?"

Nina wondered why he was so earnest and solemn. "Yes, indeed," she said, "if I can do anything for you, I'll do it with all my heart."

"Well, dear," said Arthur, softly, "I'm thinking of — of — getting married, provided "—

"Provided Miss Kaughman is ready?" asked Nina, glancing at him with her soft blue eyes.

"Miss Kaughman! Why, Nina, child, Miss Kaughman has never been more to me than a dear friend. Don't you know that Miss Kaughman has been engaged for a long time to General S---? A large part of the great regard I have for her, Nina, is on account of her kindness to you! 'Tis you, I love,--you, my beautiful child-woman,--you with your sweet ways and your loving heart. Do you think, precious child, you could trust yourself to me? Do you think, if not now, at some future time, you could give your heart to me for always? I suppose I should have waited another year but could not. If you don't want to answer me yet, don't feel that you must, darling. But, Nina dear, you are, and ever will be, the one woman in the world for me!"

Nina was looking out to sea, but her very soul drank in every word that he uttered.

Even in the moonlight he could see her color come and go, her heart heave with emotion. She turned to him when he had finished, and though tears were in her eyes, an unspeakable joy shone through them.

"Mr. Arthur — Arthur," she said softly and timidly, "I think I have loved you for a long time, — and have just found it out. I — I did not know until now that my heart was so full of you!"

The tears were running down her cheeks as she looked up at him. He took her face in his hands and kissed her reverently on the forehead.

"My precious darling, my pure white lily, so tender, so holy, God make me worthy of you!— and God bless you!" he said.

For a moment he put his arm around her, and her head was on his breast.

"God bless us both!— I feel so happy, so filled with a great peace," she said, looking trustfully into his eyes.

Two forms approached in the moonlight, which proved to be those of Emma Lee and Mr. Berkley.

"Why Nina, I thought you'd gone to bed," said Emma Lee. "Let me introduce Mr. Berkley. My friend, Miss Boise, Mr. Berkley."

"I'm very happy to meet you, Miss Boise. Miss Tucker has been telling me about her 'beautiful friend'—but, ah, 'tis worth crossing the ocean to get a glimpse of a face like yours!" said Mr. Berkley, looking the admiration he so boldly spoke.

"Don't mind him, Nina. He's talking professionally,—he's an artist," Emma Lee laughingly said, then crossed over to Mr. Everton and began a conversation with him. She soon found, from the way he answered her, that his thoughts were

not on what she was saying. She wondered what could be on his mind that gave his handsome face such a proud, joyous expression. Arthur Everton's whole being was so filled with the thought that he had won Nina's heart that nothing short of an earthquake—hardly that—could have made much impression on his mind that night.

Mr. Berkley made not much more headway with Nina than did Emma Lee with Mr. Everton.

"Say, Nina," said Emma Lee, after a while, "do you know it's getting dreadfully late? Don't you think we'd better say 'good-night'?"

"Yes," Nina replied, "and poor Aunt Maranda, I ought not to have left her alone so long."

Mr. Everton escorted them across the deck. Just before leaving them, he held Nina's hand to his lips a moment. He said "good-night" to them, then went and wrote a long letter to Nina's father.

After Nina was in her stateroom, she looked at her hand and smiled dreamily. She wondered if he had felt the delightful thrill of happiness she had, when his lips touched it.

"Well," said Emma Lee, "what did you think of Morris Berkley, Nina?"

"Wh — what did you say, Emma Lee?" asked Nina, abstractedly.

"Mr. Everton looked handsome to-night, didn't he?" continued Emma Lee.

"Oh - Arthur - yes!" said Nina.

"Nina Boise, what is the matter with you?" asked Emma Lee. "You act as if you are in a kind of ecstatic dream, and don't know a thing I'm saying!"

"Oh, Emma Lee!" said Nina, "I can't help it, I'm so happy! — I am engaged to Arthur Everton."

"Engaged to Arthur Everton!" repeated Emma Lee. "Well!—I thought you were in love with him! I suppose now you two will go mooning around the rest of the voyage. Ah—that is why he looked so—so satisfied with himself and things in general. You had just said 'yes' to him!—Well, I—I wish you joy, I'm sure," she added, realizing that she had not received the news of Nina's engagement very graciously.

But Nina did not notice it—she was too absorbed in the strange, new happiness which possessed her.

"Thank you, Emma Lee," she replied smiling, as she sat down to read her nightly chapter from the Bible; "I wish that every woman in the world could be as happy as I am!"

"I'm glad you are so happy, Nina," said Emma Lee, then leaned over and kissed her soft, pink cheek. Alas, little did the trusting, unconscious Nina realize what a "Judas' kiss" it would prove to be. Spoiled and selfish Emma Lee was filled with jealousy, and was already wondering if she could not find some way to alienate the affections of these true lovers. As for them, their hearts were filled with such a song of joy as can come only to the pure and good.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Boises and Emma Lee Tucker had been in Paris nearly a year.

Mr. and Mrs. Tucker had come for Emma Lee early in the spring, expecting to spend six or eight weeks traveling with her in Europe, and then take her home. She, however, did not wish to go with them.

"I'm much obliged, aunt," she had said, "but I don't care a thing about going around looking at art galleries and old cathedrals. They are all alike, and it's a poky, tiresome business."

"Why, Emma Lee!" her aunt had exclaimed, "do you mean to tell me you don't want to go to Rome, or Florence, or Vienna, or Venice, or any of the old historic cities you've heard of and studied about all your life?"

"That is just what I mean, aunt," was Emma Lee's reply. "Paris is good enough for me. I much prefer to stay here and go on with my studies while you and Uncle Tucker go sight-seeing. When you are ready to sail for New York, you can come back for me."

Mrs. Tucker was surprised at Emma Lee's

manifesting so much devotion to her books, but gave in to her, thinking that her love of study must have been brought about by Nina's influence.

Nina was always conscientious and industrious about any work she undertook, and had made great progress during the year, especially in music and literature, the studies she liked best. She had a new incentive, too, to make her want to learn as much as possible. Mr. Everton was much older than she, and knew a great deal more, she thought; and as she would one day be his wife, she wanted to learn all she could before that day came.

Nina felt that heaven itself could hardly bring more joy to her than did this great love that had come into her life. She grew more womanly and reserved, but more beautiful also. The love in her heart shined out in her face.

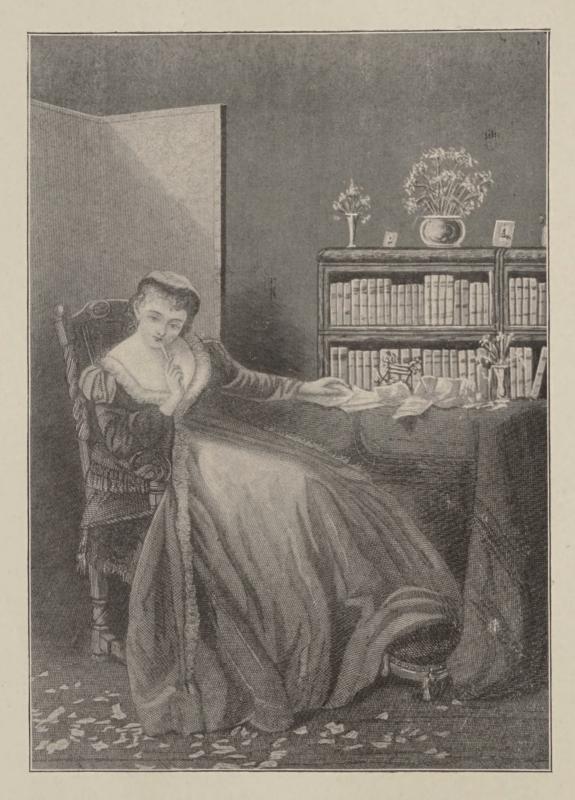
Mrs. Boise, too, was happy in her daughter's happiness. She rejoiced that Nina would all her life have the love and protection of so wise and good a man as Arthur Everton.

Emma Lee had, at times, tried in various ways to make Nina dissatisfied with the man she loved, but had never succeeded.

"He is self-conceited and proud, and I don't see how you can stand him, Nina," she said once.

"Ah, Emma Lee," Nina had replied, smiling,





THE LOVE LETTER.

"you don't know him as I do, or you could never say such things. He is all that I could hope or wish for! I would not change one thing about him."

Thus it always was. Emma Lee found that Nina's feeling for Mr. Everton was too deep and true to be in the least affected by anything she could say.

Before Mr. and Mrs. Tucker left, as Emma Lee started out with her aunt to do some shopping one day, she said: "Have you any letters you want posted, Nina?"

"Oh, yes, thank you," answered Nina. "I've just finished a letter to Mr. Everton, and shall be so glad to have you mail it for me."

Two weeks or so after Emma Lee's aunt and uncle left, Mrs. Boise imagined Nina was losing some of her bright spirits. She was getting pale, too, her mother thought, and looked as if she did not sleep enough. Finally, later in the spring, Nina had quite a sick spell. The doctor said it was caused by too close application to her books, and that she needed rest and change.

The Tuckers were coming back in a few days now, to take Emma Lee home, and Mr. and Mrs. Boise decided that after she had gone they would take Nina to some quiet watering place for a few weeks, and that when her health had improved, they, too, would sail for home.

Arthur Everton was in New York. He had been there a month or more attending some business matter, and also looking after a great charitable enterprise, in which he and some of his friends were interested. The future looked very bright to him. His love for Nina had grown stronger and deeper, as he believed hers had for him. Her letters to him through the winter had been sweet messages straight from her heart, and he never read one of them without saying: "God bless her. How dear she is to me!"

But now something seemed to be the matter. Her letters became less frequent, and when they did come, were not filled with the womanly tenderness and affection they had been; indeed, they did not seem at all like the letters his "beautiful Lily," as he called her, had been wont to write. He could not understand it, but made excuses for her, thinking she had a great deal to do, and perhaps did not have the time she had heretofore had to write all that was in her heart. Alas! however, this was not true.

One day, as he stepped into his New York office, his eyes fell upon what looked like an unusually large letter from Nina. Eagerly he

opened it, but it was only a cold note, inclosing his picture. The next mail brought another letter from her, which read:

PARIS, May 20th.

Mr. Everton:

I have been deceived in myself and you. I do not care for you at all. I have found another man whom I really do love with all my heart. My parents have decided to have me stay here and study another year, and then I shall marry Dr. Green, the man of my choice.

I did not love you, even that night on the ocean, but was just carried away for the time being. I should have thrown you over long ago, had it not been for this silly, conscientious, little Emma Lee, who, by the way, sails for New York next month. She says you are noble and good, and I ought not to treat you so; but I don't care for you, and am tired of pretending to.

Please return my letters and picture.

NINA BOISE.

The letter fell to the floor. Arthur's head dropped in his hands. He felt as if he had nothing else to live for. What could have changed his darling so, he thought, sadly, for, no matter what she said, he felt certain that she had loved him. It must be this Dr. Green. What a great influence he must have over her. The letter did not sound like Nina at all. He picked it up and read it over again, great tears standing in his eyes, of which he, strong man that he was, was entirely unconscious. His precious little Nina was his no

more! Could it be possible? He put the letter in his pocket and went home.

After a long look at her photograph, he sent it, with her letters, to her, but wrote no word. He could not.

As for Nina, when they came to her, she was amazed. She looked at them sorrowfully, but said nothing; then, for some strange reason, she hid them away, not wanting even her dear mother to question her about the coldness that had arisen, she knew not why, between Arthur and herself. It was at this time that she became so ill, and the doctor ordered rest and change.

About three weeks after Arthur had received the letter from Nina, which darkened all things for him and made his heart feel as if it were lead, a note came from Emma Lee, saying that she had arrived in New York that morning, and that he must come to see her soon, for she had much to tell him.

One evening he called on her. She received him cordially. She had the same pleasant, engaging manner as of old, but it seemed to him that the expression of her bright black eyes had grown restless and somewhat hard. She was very interesting, though, and made an attractive picture in her Paris-made evening gown of pale yellow satin. When finally Mr. Everton brought himself to ask her about Nina, she said: "I hate to tell you all this, Mr. Everton, but she has changed the most of any one I ever knew. She fell in love with a Dr. Green, who went to Paris to study art. She is simply wild about him, and is so different, you wouldn't know she was the same girl! It makes me feel dreadful, but really I don't care to associate with her any more!"

"I hope she will never marry a man beneath her," said Arthur Everton, in a low, sad tone.

"Well, Mr. Everton, you could hardly believe it, and it seems a dreadful thing to say, but I don't think she *could* do that!" exclaimed Emma Lee.

"Don't say any more, Miss Emma Lee. I can not stand it. I am still in love with Nina Boise, and shall always love her with a love that can not die," Arthur replied.

Emma Lee bit her lips with vexation, but said almost immediately: "Yes, Mr. Everton, that is just why she said they would not return to the United States. She said she did not wish to be bothered with you; that since she had known Dr. Green, you were decidedly poky, and she knew, if she came back, you would still want to hang around."

Poor Arthur could stand no more of this. He got up to go.

"Oh, don't go!" exclaimed Emma Lee. "Every one doesn't think you are poky," she added, looking smilingly up at him, and waving her fan to and fro in a manner that would best display her round white arm.

It was all lost on Mr. Everton, however. He, who was always so polite and deferential in his bearing toward all women, went away that night without shaking hands or even saying "Good night" to Emma Lee.

She grit her teeth in rage after he had gone. "I'll make him hate her yet!" she said to herself.

Emma Lee had not "grown in grace." She had indeed a wicked heart. How wicked and deceitful she had been, Arthur Everton did not then know, but he thought, as he went away, that she was altogether too willing to talk disparagingly of Nina. He did not care to call on her after that first time.

He was sad and heavy-hearted these days. He would have trusted in Nina's love beyond anything else in the world, and the thought that she was untrue to him cut deep into his soul.

He went about little and could not be interested in anything, though he did not neglect either

his business or his self-imposed duty, of relieving suffering and doing good as he found opportunity.

One evening, as he was walking not far from the river, he saw a forlorn looking woman jump from a bridge into the water. He called for help, and she was rescued. It turned out that she was a widow, with one child. She was poor and sick, and had become discouraged. Mr. Everton had her taken to a hospital, and her child sent to the Children's Home until she should be able to care for it. She told him she had a sister somewhere in New York who was a nun, but that she had recently come there, and had not been able to find this sister. When she got well enough to leave the hospital, Mr. Everton helped her to secure employment and a home for herself and her child in a hotel, the proprietor of which was an acquaintance of his.

It happened that Emma Lee and her aunt, Mrs. Tucker, went to this same hotel to stay, after having stopped the first week of their sojourn in New York at another. Mr. Tucker had gone home to his plantation soon after landing. His wife would like to have gone with him, but Emma Lee insisted on staying in New York a few weeks, and Mrs. Tucker had to stay with her.

Emma Lee had asked her aunt to write a note

to Mr. Everton, inviting him to dine with them shortly before they left their first hotel. He, however, had declined the invitation, and had not, as yet, called since, so knew nothing of their going to another hotel.

One afternoon, as he was looking over the daily paper, his eyes fell upon the paragraph:

"Mr. and Mrs. Boise and Miss Boise, of Kentucky, have returned to New York, after a year's absence in Europe."

His heart almost stopped beating. He felt as if he must go immediately to see them. Then the bitter thought came to him that they did not want to see him.

He put on his hat and went out into the street. He had not walked two blocks before he saw the familiar figure of Mr. Boise coming towards him. They clasped hands. Mr. Boise was more than glad to see him, and insisted on his going at once to the hotel to see Mrs. Boise and Nina.

Mrs. Boise received him with the same gracious cordiality as of old. Her friendliness was surely sincere, Arthur thought. She seemed like a sweet breath from Kentucky. Her stay in Paris had not changed her a particle.

In a few minutes Nina appeared. On seeing him she grew very white, and almost before they realized that anything was the matter, fell in a dead faint. Ill health, a rough sea voyage and the sudden meeting, altogether, were too much for her. They worked with her for some time, and finally brought her to. After she had swallowed a little wine, she insisted that she was all right, but Mr. Boise thought a physician ought to be called in to see her at once. Arthur said that he would go for one.

"Come back this evening, Arthur," said Mr. Boise, as he left them.

In a few minutes the doctor came. He prescribed for Nina, but said there was not much the matter with her; that the voyage had probably upset her, and she would be all right in a day or two.

When Arthur arrived that evening, Mr. and Mrs. Boise were still in the dining-room at dinner.

Nina, though much better, had not wished to go to the table, and was sitting in the small parlor adjoining their bedrooms.

Arthur looked at her pale face and slender form tenderly. He thought how often in years past his heart had gone out to her, even as it did now. He felt that her happiness was far more to him than his own; that he could suffer and even die, yes, die content, if she were happy!

"Nina, child," he said kindly, as in the old days, "if my presence causes you any annoyance, I'll go at once; but I want to say 'good-bye,' and to tell you that above everything else in the world, my child, I want you to be happy, and I hope the man you have chosen will make you so. It is hard to give you up — God only knows how hard, — but perhaps this man you have chosen is more worthy of you than I — this Dr. Green."

"Dr. Green!" exclaimed Nina. "What are you saying, Mr. Arthur? Oh, what do you mean? I believe there has been a horrible mistake, somehow!"

"Why, Nina, I wish it was a mistake; but here is your letter telling me all. It stabbed me to the heart, but I've carried it ever since it came!"

Nina read the letter in horror. She recognized her own handwriting. She wondered if she was crazy. Gathering herself together with a great effort, she said: "Before God, Mr. Arthur, I never wrote that letter!"

"You did not? Oh, thank God!" he said. "But who could have written it?"

"Let me think!" exclaimed Nina, putting her hands to her head.

"Oh, it must have been Emma Lee," she said, sadly, the tears running down her cheeks. "What did I ever do to her that she should treat me so!"

Mr. Everton came nearer to her.

"Then you still care for me, Nina?" he asked, and held out his hand.

Silently she placed hers in it. He took her other hand and drew her to him. She felt as if the earth were crumbling beneath her. Her soft blue eyes sought his pale, handsome face. Oh, how dear he was to her! Her beautiful face, with its mournful, tender eyes, told of the agony she had endured, but the light of love shined from it now.

"God only knows how I love you and how I've suffered — Arthur," she whispered.

His arm was around her. All his love was hers. A great yearning to possess her filled his heart. He had sought and now had suffered for her.

"My own darling, my beautiful one. Thank God, I've not lost you and your precious love," he said.

Soon Nina's father and mother joined them, and a happy evening they spent together, making plans for a speedy marriage.

Arthur returned to his rooms that night with a heart free as air. After all, his "beautiful Lily" was true to him, and would soon be his very own, his forever. As for Emma Lee, he wouldn't have

my days?"

believed so fair a woman capable of such meanness. He thanked God that her wicked purpose had come to naught.

Alas! he could not see what trouble was yet in store for him. Early the next morning there was a gentle rap at his door, and when he opened it there stood a "Sister of Charity."

"Pardon me, kind sir," she said, "but I came to reveal some wickedness to you. It is not my business, but I feel as if it were a duty I owe you. You are the man who rescued my sister when drowning, and who, when she was sick and destitute, found a comfortable home for her and her child. I have prayed for the time to come when I could in some manner repay you for your kindness, and now my prayers are answered. Shall I tell you?"

"Yes, sister, if it concerns me, tell me," he replied. "I have faith in you. My mother was a Catholic, and a better woman never lived."

"First, kind sir, you must promise me not to relate to any one what I tell you," she said. "It is all true as gospel, but our vows are such that we may not repeat anything we hear; and should the priest hear of my telling you anything, I would be turned out of the sisterhood, placed in a cell, and fed on bread and water the remainder of my days."

"Well, sister, you need not fear me. I will never betray a friend, and, moreover, I would not have you suffer all that for worlds," said Arthur.

"Last night," the sister began, "a young lady in a hotel was taken quite sick, and I was assigned to her for a nurse. While I was there another most beautiful young lady, with black hair and eyes, who had evidently been sent for, came in, and the sick girl seemed very glad to see her. From the run of their conversation, I should judge that my patient had lately been in Europe, but I did not pay much attention until I heard her mention your name. She said that you, Mr. Everton, had been to see her, and that she had put 'all' on her friend. 'I pretended that you did it all, and I want you to tell him you did it,' were her words. Then my patient said that her father was insolvent, and that that was why they had returned to New York. She said that some doctor, after finding out that they were poor, had told her he could not marry her, and that then they resolved to find you and fix up this story, putting the blame for something on her friend - 'Emily,' I think she called her. 'I knew you would help me out,' she said to her; 'you've always been so kind to me. I was not surprised when Arthur Everton came,' my patient continued. 'He was the same old fool,

and I played him fine. I can never love anybody but the doctor, and can never be happy with any one else; but papa said I must pretend, and Arthur would marry me and save us. Won't you help me, Emily, by telling Arthur that you wrote these letters, if he asks you?' After a moment's reflection, this Emily answered, 'Yes.' After she had gone, my patient had a high fever, and was much worse. I was with her all night, but this morning, when I was relieved by another nurse, she was some better. Her mother will allow no more visitors, however, as she says they upset her."

"Sister," said Arthur, "what you have said astounds me. What was your patient's name?"

"I can not tell you," she answered; "but this Emily called her Lina or Nina, or something like that. She was beautiful beyond description."

"Yes," said Arthur, with a groan, "she is beautiful as a dream, and had it not been for you, she would soon have been my wife! But, ah, I can never marry a woman who loves another man, and who would plan to deceive me in such a horrible manner."

After the sister had left, Arthur's face took on a hard, set look. He determined that, no matter what his feelings were toward Nina, he did not want to marry her if he could not trust her, and he would certainly not be made a dupe of by her father. "Oh, who would have thought such people as they were could stoop to such deceit for a little money!" he thought. "Insolvent! How could they be? Mr. Boise, he knew, was very well off, and Mrs. Boise had considerable property besides in her own name. Could this story all be false? Could Emma Lee have bribed the sister to come to him with such a yarn? No," he thought, "that couldn't be; the sisters are under strict vows, and this one had a good face." She impressed him as being a refined, cultivated woman; besides, she did not even know Emma Lee's right name.

He picked up the morning paper, and almost the first thing he saw was an account of Mr. Boise's assignment! All his property was under mortgage, the paper said, on account of his having gone security for a cousin to the extent of a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

"It's all true, then," thought Arthur. "Why didn't he say something about it yesterday? Why didn't they come to me in a frank, honorable way, and ask my help? Oh, what friends I thought them, and what would I not have done for them, for Nina's sake! But after this we must be strangers; and now I've got to write a note and

tell her so. Ah, me, how I wish, instead, I could go to her and say, 'Here I am, to save all for you!' But I am a fool to think kindly of her when they have so basely tried to deceive me."

The note Nina received from him read:

My Dear Miss Boise:

Upon reflection, I beg to break our engagement. Money is not the thing it is represented to be, as you would find if you married one you did not love for its sake!

Trusting we may not meet again, I am,
Yours truly, ARTHUR EVERTON.

When Nina read these lines, her heart sank within her. "Trouble never comes singly," she moaned to herself, as she wiped the tears from her eyes. She wondered what could have changed him so. "I shouldn't think our misfortune could affect his love for me," she thought, sorrowfully. "I should think our loss would be nothing to him, when he is worth several millions. Papa said he could not ask any one for help, but that Arthur would surely offer it. I believe he would have done so once. I suppose he does not want to marry a poor girl. Oh, why has he changed! That can't be it! Why, why did he make me love him so! Oh, he seemed so good, I couldn't help it! Well, well, I must stop my tears and be brave and cheerful for my parents' sake. We have each other, and if we have no home on earth, we have one in heaven, and are hand in hand on our journey."

That afternoon Mrs. Boise was sitting alone when Mr. Boise came in. He looked sad and sick.

"Few of my friends knew me this morning," he said. "I met Arthur, and even he only bowed in the most distant manner! Nearly all meet me in the same way."

"Arthur has written Nina a note breaking their engagement," said Mrs. Boise, sadly.

"You don't tell me! Well, you need not be surprised at anything these days!" Mr. Boise exclaimed.

"Nina took it very quietly," her mother went on. "She said that though she loved him, she did not want him if he did not want her, and that she would still have her mother and father; that their love could not change."

"Bless her heart; she is a child after my own heart," said Mr. Boise.

"Wife," he said presently, "I am thinking very seriously of going to Mexico. I met a man this morning, an old friend, who has been there, and come back rich. He is the only one of all my acquaintances who offered me any kind of help.

He says he will give me letters of introduction to business friends, who will help me, and that he will let me have the money to take us all there. I believe it would be the best thing for us. The climate there is good. New York is no place for poor people, and I don't want to go back to Kentucky."

"Well," said Mrs. Boise, "let's call Nina and see what she says.— Nina, dear, your father is talking of taking us to Mexico. What do you think of it?" her mother asked, as she came into the room and gently laid her arm around her father's shoulders.

"I am willing to go anywhere or do anything that seems best," Nina answered.

"Well, I'll make all the arrangements, and we will start to-morrow night," said Mr. Boise, patting Nina's hand affectionately.

After Nina had showed Arthur Everton's note to her mother and made the quiet comments Mrs. Boise had repeated to her husband, nothing more was said about Mr. Everton; but Mr. Boise, though his heart was burdened with his own great financial calamity, showed by an added tenderness of manner toward Nina that he, as well as her mother, felt for his precious daughter in her trouble.

The next evening they were on their way. The journey was a sad one to Nina, though she tried to be cheerful, and listened with interest to her father as he talked of the wealth he would make for them all in Mexico.

CHAPTER XX.

The first year Nina and her parents spent in Mexico all went well.

They soon had a comfortable little home in Silao, opposite the plaza, which Mrs. Boise and Nina took much pleasure in making as attractive and as near like their old home in Kentucky as possible.

Mr. Boise worked hard, and was obliged to make a business trip to the City of Mexico every few weeks. He was doing well, however, and felt that they would soon be ahead again.

Mrs. Boise and Nina frequently met him at the station when he returned from his trips, and if they did not, were sure to be awaiting him with a warm welcome on the front porch when he reached home. A day came, though, when they were neither at the station nor in sight as he walked toward his home. He was obliged to unfasten the door himself, and when he got into the front hali even, no one was in sight. Presently Mrs. Boise appeared. She kissed him silently and led him to Nina's room, where his

child, the pride of his heart, lay quite sick with a high fever.

"Have you had a doctor?" he asked Mrs. Boise, in alarm.

"Yes, indeed," she said; "he has been here three times since last night, and I expect him again very soon."

"What does he say?" Mr. Boise inquired.

"He could not tell what was the matter yet, but looked very grave," she answered.

Soon the doctor came, and to their horror said:

"It is just as I feared, Mrs. Boise. Your daughter has smallpox. I will vaccinate you both. Chewchew has had it, and can attend Miss Nina."

Chewchew was their Spanish servant. She had come to them from another American family soon after they settled in Silao, and had been with them a year now. She was faithful and reliable, and soon proved to be an unusually good nurse.

The doctor gave her full directions in regard to taking care of Nina, but Mrs. Boise insisted that she must nurse, too.

"I have already been exposed to the disease, doctor," she said, "and if I am to have it, my staying away from Nina now won't prevent it."

She did not take it, but when the doctor came the next day, he found that her husband was down with it. Mr. Boise had been feeling badly for some days, he told the doctor, but did not realize that anything serious could be the matter.

Mrs. Boise and Chewchew had their hands full for many weeks.

At last Mr. Boise began to recover, and then before long was up and about, looking quite himself again, except for a few marks.

Poor Nina, however, was still very low. For days she lay almost at the point of death. She looked like a roll of burnt cotton. It was hard to tell her face from the back of her head, for her hair, eyebrows and lashes came out, and her eyes and nose were so disfigured that her mother wondered if they would ever look natural again.

Mrs. Boise anxiously watched her child day and night, scarcely taking time to eat or sleep. She prayed fervently to God, and after a terrible siege Nina's life was spared. The morning the doctor told them she was going to get well, he said that she must have been left for some great purpose, for he had never seen any one go through the suffering she had and live.

She slowly regained her strength, but even after she was well her best friend would hardly have recognized her. Her face was marked with ugly pits. Her nose was no longer the straight,

beautiful nose it had been. Her hair grew again, but had lost its lovely golden sheen, and her eyes, once as clear as the stars of heaven, were for a long time dim and weak. Indeed, no trace of Nina could be seen, save in her sweet and gentle disposition. That remained unchanged, and because of it her face, plain as it was, had so beautiful an expression that it was attractive and lovable.

"It seems too bad," said her mother, when she saw Nina feeling her face with her hand one day.

"Now, mamma, don't," said Nina, with a smile.
"You know it must be God's will that I should be so marked, and it was done for some wise purpose which we can not understand."

"I could have submitted uncomplainingly if it were myself," her mother replied; "but to see my only child robbed of her beauty just when the bud of maidenhood was unfolding into such a lovely flower of womanhood—oh, it wrings my very heart! But you are right, dear child. It is no doubt because we do not see far enough that our trials seem such dire afflictions to us. We know they are all sent in love, for 'God is love.' And how I thank him, Nina, for sparing your life to me! I can understand the feeling of that mother, whose young daughter had died, and was brought

back to life by Christ's command. And what a good daughter you are, too. Ah, you, who have brought so much joy and comfort to your parents' hearts, will surely, one day, be very happy yourself!"

"I am not unhappy. You and papa and all who truly love me, can not love me less because my face is plain; and surely it is far sweeter and more satisfying to be loved for oneself than to be admired for one's appearance."

"That is true. God bless you, my child. You are growing wise as well as good, and she who is truly wise and good has a beauty not of this world, a beauty nothing can take away."

Things were again going smoothly. The weeks slipped by filled with such sweet content as comes after hearts have been drawn closer by some great trouble or anxiety which has passed.

It came time for Mr. Boise to go on one of his usual trips to the City of Mexico. His wife asked him if he felt strong enough to make the journey.

"Except for a little cold, I feel perfectly well," he answered; "but for some reason I never hated to leave home so in my life."

"Can't you wait another week?" asked Mrs. Boise.

"Yes, papa, do. You aren't obliged to go to-day, are you?" said Nina.

"Well, I suppose I could put it off a few days longer," replied Mr. Boise; "but I ought to go to-day, and there is no real reason why I shouldn't."

He kissed them "good-by" then, and they watched him start off with his handbag, as they had so often done before, little realizing how soon and in what condition they would see him again.

He had been gone but twenty-four hours when a messenger came to the house with a telegram. Mrs. Boise, Mrs. Murphy, a neighbor, and Nina were on the front porch. Mrs. Boise opened the telegram and read:

"Mr. Boise is very sick. Come at once."

Mrs. Murphy helped them get ready, and they left on the next train.

When they reached Mr. Boise, they found that he had had a chill, after which he had been taken with an acute pain in his lungs, that had grown worse and worse.

He smiled when Mrs. Boise and Nina came into the room and kissed him.

"I am so glad you are here. I feel better now," he said, in a relieved manner. The physician who was attending him told Mrs. Boise that her husband had pneumonia.

"I think there is no immediate danger," the doctor said; "but this disease at his time of life is a serious matter, and your husband is a very sick man. You and your daughter had better take turns staying with him, for neither of you look very strong. You must both rest as soon as you can, and you ought to spend as much time as you can spare away from him in the open air."

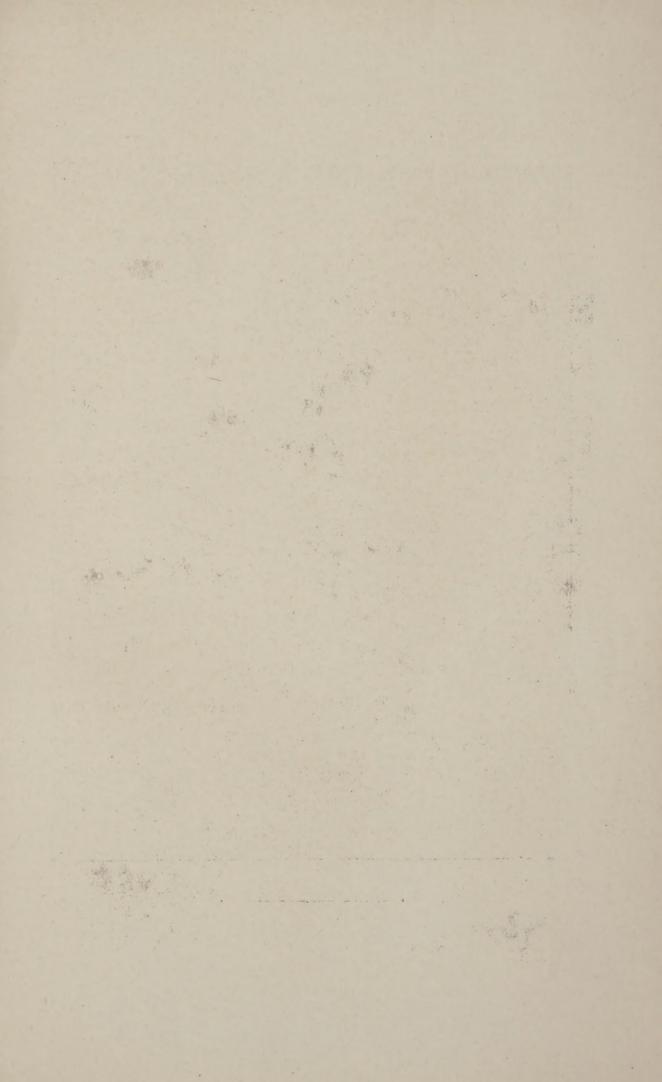
Mrs. Boise sat with him the first few hours and sent Nina to lie down and rest, for the latter looked very pale and weary from her journey.

She came back after a while, feeling much refreshed.

"It's my turn to stay with papa now, mamma, dear," she said; "and you must rest, for you look worn out yourself."

Mrs. Boise gave her directions about the medicine, kissed Mr. Boise softly on the forehead, then left him in Nina's care. After having had a long talk with his wife, he had fallen asleep, and still seemed to be resting quietly.

Presently he opened his eyes and asked for a glass of water. Nina got it for him, then sat by him on the bed. Anxiously and tenderly, with his hand in hers, she watched him breathe. Near the





SILENT MEDITATION.

bed was an open window, toward which he turned his eyes. The sun was setting in all its glory. The evening was serenely beautiful, but to Nina, for some reason, seemed unspeakably sad.

"What a lovely scene this is, my daughter!" said her father, faintly. "With what majesty does the sun retire from the world! The calmness which attends its departure is such, I think, as must attend a good man's exit."

He paused a few moments, then raising his eyes to heaven, exclaimed: "Merciful Father, had it pleased thee, I could wish to have been spared to this dear child and her precious mother; but thy will, not mine, be done. Confiding in thy mercy and in the Redeemer's saving love, I leave them with thee."

Nina's tears were falling on her father's hand. He took his handkerchief and wiped her eyes, saying: "Sweet teardrops these are to papa; but, my daughter, you must not weep so bitterly for me."

She laid her face against her father's, and he kissed her tenderly. Then, in a moment, she saw he was gone, or had fainted. She called for help.

Mrs. Prum, who kept the house, and two or three gentlemen ran in.

"Oh, has he fainted?" said Nina. "He can't be dead!"

They chafed his hands and temples, and used every remedy to revive him, but in vain. His spirit had forsaken its tenement of clay forever.

Nina wrung her hands together, moaning: "Oh, what shall I do! My papa is gone — gone!" then leaned back and looked so white they thought she had fainted; but she had not.

"My poor mamma! I am her only comfort now. I must bear up," she said, with tears streaming from her eyes.

Presently her mother came in. She cast herself on her knees at her husband's bedside. All went from the room in silence and tears, but Nina.

"Precious mother," she said, kneeling beside her and putting her arm around her, "all his work is done. He has gone to his home on high, where there are no troubles — no sorrows — where all is peace. God took him, and he left us in God's care. Oh, dear mamma, do not weep so!" she sobbed, as the tears fell fast from her own eyes.

Poor little angel! With a truly Christian spirit she was trying to console her mother, when her own grief was beyond measure.

After a while Mrs. Prum came and took them away. Love and pity filled the hearts of all who knew them, and many, strangers, from that time on were lifelong friends. So it ever is. Surely we

may know God pities and feels for us in time of trouble, when his humblest creatures show in every way possible their sympathy and love.

When Nina and her mother next viewed the body of the beloved father and husband, it lay in the parlor, surrounded by roses and pansies.

So many flowers had been sent, the room could hardly hold them all.

A Methodist minister, an old friend of Mr. Boise, who had charge of a church in the City of Mexico, conducted the funeral service; and many friends Mr. Boise had made during his frequent visits to that city went with them on the funeral train to Sunset Hill, where his body was laid to rest.

Mrs. Boise and Nina visited with friends for a few days, then started back to their home in Silao. They wondered what they would do without the husband and father to stand between them and the world. They were Christian women, however, and felt that God would hold their hands and open up the way for them. The peace that he alone can give filled their hearts.

"Mamma, dear, now we can see why God gave me a talent. I can teach music, and may be get a place to sing in a church," said Nina. "I am so glad papa bought the piano Christmas and insisted on my keeping up my music."

After they got on the train, Mrs. Boise was handed a sealed package, which she found, when she opened it, contained two thousand dollars. A letter accompanied the package, which said that Mr. Boise's business and railroad friends sympathized deeply with his widow and her daughter in their loss of him, and wished them to accept the inclosed as a token of their sincere appreciation of the sterling worth and noble character of Mr. Boise.

"His works do follow him," said Mrs. Boise, with the tears running down her cheeks. "Ah, Nina, who can tell what a mighty and lasting influence the acts of a good man have over those who come in contact with him! Your father's own open-hearted, generous nature has won the esteem and friendship of those who now bestow this magnanimous gift upon us. It is a 'God-send' in more ways than one!"

"It is too bad we had to leave without seeing them and thanking them!" exclaimed Nina, with tears glistening in her eyes also.

CHAPTER XXI.

The train was speeding onward. It approached a curve.

Nina was looking out of the window, wondering if they would spend the rest of their days in Mexico. She thought of all the trouble she had had in that country, of her sad experiences there when a child, of how she had been found and rescued by Arthur Everton, with Miss Kaughman's help. She thought of the past year spent in that warm, bright country, and wondered if Mr. Everton ever thought of her now. Until trouble and sickness came she had tried to be content and happy; but she knew there was a void, a something that she missed, deep down in her heart, try as she would to forget. And now her father's death had come and again changed all. she thought, "I must be brave, put my trust in God, and find all the happiness I can in the duties that present themselves; besides, I have my precious mamma still,"— and she looked in her face with a loving smile.

Suddenly the engine whistle gave a loud, shrill shriek. There was a sudden stop, an awful crash,

and all in the car were thrown violently forward in their seats. Women screamed, children cried, and men made frantic efforts to get out and see what the trouble was.

They had run into an excursion train. No one on their car was seriously hurt, but they soon found that a number had been killed and fifty or more wounded on the excursion train. All that could were asked to come and assist in caring for those who had been hurt. A gentleman, all cut and bleeding, was assigned to Nina.

"How familiar he looks! Do I know him?" she thought, as she approached him.

"Oh!" she gasped, when she saw his face, and a sudden longing came over her to throw her arms around him. Outwardly she was self-possessed, however.

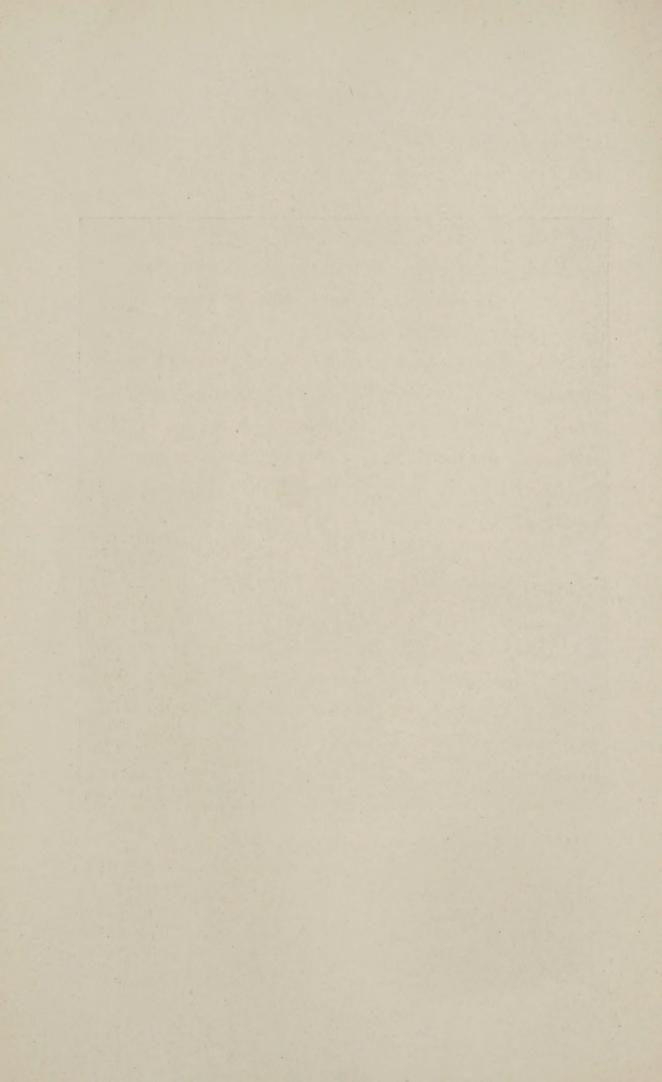
"Are you suffering much pain?" she asked him, as she washed the blood from his forehead and bathed his wound.

He opened his eyes with a start when she spoke, but closed them after glancing at her, and a disappointed expression came over his countenance. He said that he thought he was not seriously hurt; that he felt better, but still suffered.

He was soon carried to a wayside house, where



RESCUING ARTHUR AFTER THE ACCIDENT.



all the wounded were being taken. Her heart beat fast, for her charge was Arthur Everton! She saw, however, that he did not recognize her.

After a doctor had dressed his wounds and showed him how to bandage them, Arthur said to her: "You have been very kind to me. Were you on the excursion train?"

"No," she replied. "My mother and I were on the other train. We were returning to our home in Silao. We had been to bury my father, who was sick only forty-eight hours. My mother is caring for a lady who was fatally injured, she is afraid."

"May I ask how long you have lived in Mexico?" asked Arthur, after a pause.

"About sixteen months," Nina replied.

"Do you like it here?" he questioned.

"Well," she said, "there are places I like better. We were unfortunate and lost all we had. We came to Mexico because my father could get business here."

"Pardon me, but what is your name?" asked Arthur.

"You don't know me, so need not know my name," she replied. "I'll do the best I can for you until a nurse comes, but after that I'll leave you, and you will never see me again."

"I must know your name," he said, rising on his elbow and looking earnestly at her, "and I'll tell you why. Your voice is so strangely like the voice of a girl dearer to me than life. I am here searching for her, and must find her, if I have to go to the end of the world. Unintentionally, I wronged her, and she is an angel on earth."

"Could you tell me about her?" asked Nina, her heart quaking within her.

"Yes," he answered, after a moment, "I shall be glad to. There is something about you that seems so very familiar to me, yet I know I have never seen your face before. — For years, since she was quite a child, I have loved this pure, sweet girl," he began. "Her life had much sadness in it, but I won't go into particulars now. After our troth was plighted she was in Europe with a Satan in the form of a handsome girl friend, who proved to be a mean and contemptible enemy! This friend wrote cold, heartless letters to me in my loved one's handwriting, and signed my darling's name to them. Finally I received one, breaking our engagement. Then that 'piece of feminine wickedness' came back to New York and told me the basest falsehoods about my beloved's having given her heart to another. All the joy went out of my life. However, in a few weeks my 'Lily,'

as I used to call her, returned from Europe. went to see her. She still loved me, and told me she had not written those cruel letters and knew nothing about them, - that the friend must have written them. Our engagement was renewed and the day was set for our marriage. I went home the happiest of men. But, alas, the next morning a 'sister of charity' came to me, and told me 'as a kindness 'dreadful tales about 'my love's 'deceit and attachment for another. I wonder now that I was deceived by the wicked lies of the 'sister,' but she had a good face, and her lies fitted in so well with things that really did happen, that I believed all she said. I wrote a heartless letter to my betrothed,— whose goodness and truth I ought never to have doubted for an instant, - and we have never met since."

He closed his eyes for a moment and his voice was husky when he continued: "Three weeks ago to-day I was sent for, and went to a house that was entirely strange to me. I was taken into the sickroom of a lady who was thought to be dying, and I immediately recognized the 'sister' who had told me the miserable story that parted me from my love. She told me that she was the aunt of the deceitful girl who had been the cause of all our trouble. She said she could not meet her God

in peace until she confessed that to please her niece she had assumed the disguise of a 'sister' and gone to me with wicked lies about the sweet girl I love. She said, too, that my loved ones and her parents thought my feelings had changed because they had lost their means.— How could she think that of me!"

Nina's eyes were full of tears, and she turned away a moment.

"Oh, that I could see her," he said, sadly. "There is nothing or nobody that could make me doubt her now."

"You might see changes in her," said Nina.

"She might be disfigured in some way."

"No, no. She will always be beautiful to me. It's the spirit that's in her that I love, and that makes her the most precious of women to me!"

She raised the pillow back of him so that he might drink some tea, and as she did so her charm — the old luck-charm by which he had discovered her identity years before — fell from her throat, all unbeknown to her. She turned to get the tea, and he picked it up. When she came back to the bedside she thought that he had either fainted or was dead. She screamed for a doctor. Then she saw the charm in his hand, and, herself, was overcome. She felt herself falling, and knew nothing

more until she came to and saw Arthur bending over her.

"Oh, my 'beautiful Lily,'—my long-lost darling, I have found you," he was saying. "Will you forgive me and love me as of old?"

Of course, she forgave him with all her heart, and to their two souls earth again became paradise. When Mrs. Boise and Nina returned to their home in Silao, Mr. Everton accompanied them. They soon made arrangements to go North, and have the remains of Mr. Boise taken with them.

So, a second time Arthur Everton took Nina from trouble and sorrow in Mexico, to content and happiness in "the States."

CHAPTER XXII.

Nina and her mother were again in their old home in Kentucky.

It was the morning of Nina's wedding. That day at noon she and Arthur Everton were to be made one. Their nearest and dearest friends were all with them. Even Miss Kaughman — who was Miss Kaughman no longer, for two years before she had married a great soldier,— had come from the Far West to be with Nina on her wedding day.

Mrs. Boise and "Miss Mary," as Nina still called her, had dressed the bride, and were adding the "finishing touches." Nina was looking at the reflection of her straight young figure in a tall mirror, and wondering how "Arthur" would like her in the clouds of billowy white that fell around her. Her eyes had become clear and beautiful again, and so soft yet bright, so deep yet sweet, was their expression that one wondered what heavenly thoughts the soul must have that looked through them. Her hair had regained a little of its old luster. Her face, too, had some color in it to-day, and was wreathed in happy smiles.

There was a rap at the door.

"Come in," called Nina, sweetly.

"Lord bless the chile!" exclaimed old Aunt Jane as she opened the door. "Ain't she jes' like a angel straight from heaben!"

"Come here, Aunt Jane, I want to hug you—just the way I used to when I was a little girl—I feel so happy to-day, I can't contain myself," said Nina, and then threw her arms around Aunt Jane's neck and kissed her shiny black cheek in a way that almost took the old "Aunty's" breath away. "Aunt Jane," Nina went on, "did they tell you about the old charm you gave me? how twice it helped bring Mr. Everton to me? and now, you, Aunt Jane, shall have it back—I won't need it any longer, for I shall never be separated from him again."

"Bless your heart, honey, it may be the Lord made use ob dat ole cha'm to help, but it mus' a been your own be-oo-ti-ful se'f what done the biznis!—but I'll take it an' keep it, till—well, may be some time another little angel might come down from heaben!—an' would like to hab it!" said Aunt Jane, wiping a tear from her eye.

"Are you all ready for the wedding, Aunt Jane?" asked Mrs. Boise.

"Yes'm, ole Miss, I is. I's got on my bes' black dress; an' a spick-span white apron, an' my

head-dress, ole Miss," she said, putting her hand to the bright plaid bandana tied round her head; "ain't all lace an' ribben like yours, but it suits my ole black face an' is the kin' I is use to. I's got a bran new pocket hank-chef, too, wif a trimmed border. Miss Mary, the lady what's fixin' Miss Nina's wreaf, there,—she gib it to me."

"You'll do very well, Aunt Jane. How are things coming on down in the kitchen?" inquired her mistress.

"Jes' splendid, ole Miss. Dinah's chickens an' salads an' good things do jes' look mos' too fine to eat! She gi' me a peep at the weddin'-cake, too — my, but it's han'some! — an' Tom, he's got the ice-cream mos' froze. Law, Miss Nina, you orter see how dat nigger am tricked out! I tole him he did'n have no sense, he orter dress more quiet-like for white folks weddin's, an' not look like he are goin' on a cake-walk! Aunt Dina, too, tole him he was'n raised up right or he'd know servants orten to extract obtentions by their 'pearance. We'l, reckon I better go on down an' see if I kin he'p any."

They laughed as they imagined the old colored women lecturing Tom on his appearance in language beyond the ability of the simple old souls to use correctly.

"Fifteen minutes to twelve, and the bride is all ready!" exclaimed 'Miss Mary.'

"Give me a kiss," said Nina, pushing back her veil and putting her arm around her friend.

"You, too, my precious mamma," she said, turning to her — "and now, I want you to leave me alone for just five minutes." She wiped the tears from her mother's eyes, and her own were wet as, with her arm still around her, her mother kissed her for the third time.

When they had gone, Nina knelt by the bedside and bowed her head in prayer. The prayer she poured forth so earnestly was sacred; so we, too, will leave her, a moment, alone with her God.

At exactly twelve she walked into the parlor, a vision of beauty. Her luminous smile and the light that shone from her lovely eyes made glad the countenances of those who gazed upon her.

Arthur was waiting for her, and soon, beneath a beautiful canopy of lilies and ferns, they were pronounced "man and wife."

"She stood like an angel just wandering from heaven,
A pilgrim benighted away from the skies,
And little we deemed that to mortals were given
Such visions of beauty as came from her eyes.

"She looked up and smiled on the many glad faces,
The friends of her childhood, who stood by her side,
But she shone o'er them all, like a queen o'er her graces,
When, blushing, she whispered the vows of a bride.

"We sang an old song, as with garlands we crowned her, And each left a kiss on her delicate brow,

We prayed that a blessing might ever surround her, And the future of life be unclouded as now."

* * * * * * *

At last, after years of patient effort and waiting, Arthur Everton had secured his prize. His greatest earthly hope is realized, and his heart is satisfied. He sits at the window, and the same moon that he has meditated beneath, many evenings before, shines upon him now; but he is no longer alone.

A beautiful head rests upon his shoulder. He tell his "Lily" how he *loves* her, and she with uplifted face asks, "Arthur, why?"

Then in a voice that is music to her ears, he replies: "Nina, my beloved, I will try to tell you: Kindness, the ornament of man, is the chief glory of woman. It is indeed her true prerogative — her scepter and her crown. It is the sword with which she conquers and the charm with which she captivates. What a bright light does history throw around woman in her recorded deeds of kindness! You remember Virginia, and how like a fountain in a wilderness is the story of Pocahontas saving the life of Captain Smith, and many other instances are recorded which tell how woman's kindness appeals to what is best in man, and subdues him.

"You, my own love, when but twelve years old, and filled with sorrow for the dear mother you thought you had lost, showed by your acts, as well as your sweet words and gentle ways, the kindness in your heart. Well I remember how you tied up a poor black boy's foot when he cut it, how you brought in a starving dog and fed it, how every unfortunate creature seemed to inspire your love and pity. My heart went out to you, even then; and afterwards, when I learned to know you better, the reverence and love I felt for you grew to be the sweetest part of my life.

"The Christian religion gives the beatitude to woman's character. The highest tribute to her sympathy, and the highest examples of her overflowing goodness of heart, are found in the sacred pages of the Bible. She washed the Redeemer's feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. She was the last to linger around his cross when he was crucified, and the first at his tomb after he arose from the dead.

"I knew that such women must live to-day as well as then; but none satisfied my soul until I found you, my beautiful one. Completely and unreservedly I could trust my heart and life's happiness in your keeping, and, oh, how I thank God for blessing my existence with you—my wife."

He kissed her cheek, all wet with tears, and her arm stole around his neck, telling him plainer than words that she, too, thanked God for blessing her life with him,— her husband.

The angels in heaven smiled and clapped their hands, when they beheld the joy that filled the hearts of these two, as they sat there with the moonlight streaming over them.

* * * * * * *

True marriage is not of man, but of God. It can not be derived from any combination of mere earthly affection or worldly prudence; it descends from the marriage of heavenly love and wisdom in the mind, which looks not simply to temporal, but eternal happiness. Natural love is blind; spiritual love dwells with wisdom. Marriage, grounded in genuine love and sanctified by genuine wisdom, will be found to realize its highest promises. Conjugal love before marriage is like the bud of a beautiful flower: the flower is yet wrapped in its coverings; marriage unfolds and makes it sensible. Marriage is thus the expanded blossom of conjugal love, where the beauties of its refined intelligence are displayed, where the odors of its delicate perceptions are exhaled, where the nectar of its pure delights is distilled, and where new affections and perceptions of the good and the true are continually produced.

And although at the resurrection there shall be no relation of husband and wife, and no marriage shall be celebrated but "the marriage of the Lamb," yet there shall be remembered how all passed through this life, which is a type of that; and from this sacramental union all holy pairs shall pass to the spiritual and eternal, where love shall be their portion and joy shall crown their heads, and they shall lie in the bosom of Jesus and the heart of God to eternal ages.

CHAPTER XXIII.

There was never a more beautiful face than that of Nina, or a more lovely character. Her disposition was to always see the good in everything.

Prudence, if no higher motive, should keep a woman above the meanness of calumny. If she can not raise her soul above the low regions of suspicion, let her at least beware how she betrays her weakness to others. In no way is woman so sure to bring injurious surmises upon herself as by indulging in surmises about her sisters.

"Nothing is all dark," said Nina. "There can not be a picture without its bright spots; and the steady contemplation of what is good in others has a reflex influence upon the beholder."

How true this is. Dwell on what is best in others, and unconsciously you will bring a blessing to your own heart. The thoughts a soul feeds on make it what it is.

Wealth may surround woman with its blandishments; beauty, learning or talents may bring her admirers, but love and kindness alone can hold captive the heart; whether she lives in a cottage or a palace, these graces will surround her with perpetual sunshine, ever bringing herself and those near her joy and sweet content.

"This is why my wife has such a beautiful face: she has a beauty which changes not with features, which fades not with years!" thought Arthur, when, as they came from a musicale one evening some two years after they were married, he remembered how faces brightened and voices softened when Nina came near.

"Oh, Arthur, see, there is the light of our home!" she exclaimed, presently. "Why is it that it shines so much brighter and clearer than the light from any other house? It was pleasant to meet with our friends, and the music was beautiful and inspiring; but no earthly vision brings so much joy to my heart as the picture of our home. - I see mamma with her lovely face and quiet smile - dear old Aunt Jane holding our darling baby, both so bright and happy - and you, my husband, sitting there with your paper, but glancing every now and then at your dear ones near you, especially your wife, who drops her sewing a moment and goes to you with heart so full she must share what's in it, with you!-I am so happy, my husband. I can not express my happiness to you. - Ah, surely, there is nothing in the world like love, my beloved!"

"Nothing, my precious Lily!" replied Arthur as, after he had helped her from the carriage, he drew her arm through his. "It makes me shudder yet to think of the time I came so near losing you."

"Yes, that was a trying time for both of us," said Nina. "I wonder what has become of Emma Lee."

"That wicked, deceitful girl,—she did not have one good trait!" exclaimed Arthur.

"She was sweet-mannered, Arthur, and handsome, and I don't believe she realized what an outrageous wrong she was doing. If she did, she couldn't have done it. Don't blame her; try and forgive her, for perhaps she knew not what she did," Nina said.

"How could she help knowing?" he replied.

"I do blame her and always shall. Why shouldn't I? She brought her own aunt in sorrow to the grave, I haven't a doubt. She was bad enough and mean enough, too, but had the grace to be sorry for what she'd been influenced to do; but Emma Lee!"—

"Well, Arthur, Emma Lee had no mother, and was spoiled from the time she was a child. Her aunt, who was fond of her and very proud of her beauty, encouraged her in worldly display and self-

ishness. Oh! what a sad mistake parents and guardians, all unknowingly, make when they thus prepare girls to bring misery to themselves and those around them. It is the daughters trained in retiring, industrious and virtuous ways who become a real ornament to their sex and a blessing to their race - corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace.' Oh, we must teach our little Lily to be modest, true-hearted and loving. I would have her be, even as the lily of the valley, or the thoughtful-eyed white violet. Graceful they are, and pure as the stars; but the one, filling the air with sweet perfume, hides itself in bended obscurity, and the other smiles with soft and bashful innocence along the footpaths and the waysides."

"We'll give her to God, Arthur my love, won't we? And he will put his love in her heart and will teach us how to teach her," said Nina, as later she knelt beside her baby's cradle and gazed in a rapture of mother love on the face of her sleeping child.

Arthur stood in the doorway a moment watching them. A reverent, tender look came into his eyes. "My sweet, holy flowers, plucked from heaven and full of heaven's grace!" he thought;

"God Almighty help me in caring for them and ministering unto them."

The next morning, on opening the paper, Arthur exclaimed: "Nina! Nina! listen a moment," then read the following:

SAD END OF FORMER SOCIETY BELLE.

Miss Emma Lee Tucker, a Louisiana beauty, comes to a melancholy end. Several years ago Miss Tucker came to New York, young, beautiful and rich. Friends and admirers flocked around her, and, for a time, no woman in the land was more sought and courted. She, however, stepped from the "straight and narrow way." The Aunt who had brought her up died of grief, after which Miss Tucker soon ran through her fortune. A dreadful malady then fell like a judgment upon her. The bloom faded from her cheek, her eyes lost their luster, and every personal charm withered. The loss of her health and the decay of her beauty were followed by destitution and wretchedness. Surely "the way of transgressors is hard." Friendless and helpless, the former belle was now an outcast: for those who had flattered and caressed her in the days of her wicked prosperity, first ignored, then lost sight of her completely. She passed some time in untold suffering, and was finally confined to her bed in a wretched back room of a tenement house. Here she was found in a dying condition by a "Sister of Mercy," who had her removed to a hospital. Miss Tucker there told something of her history, and ended by exclaiming, "Alas, we poor hard-hearted mortals must suffer before we learn to feel for others, or repent of our wickedness. What sins I've committed! What lies I've told! What wretchedness and misery and disgrace I have brought to those who cared most for me! My heart was harder than stone. I was all vile and nothing true! But now I pay the debt, and it is hard - hard. Oh, Lord! is there any mercy for me?" she faintly gasped, and was no more. She had passed from this world to the unknown beyond.

When Arthur stopped reading and looked at his wife, she was in a flood of tears.

"Nina, dear," he said, "do not weep. Why should you weep for her who brought so much sorrow to your heart? For my part, when I think of a life like hers being ended, I feel like saying, 'Well done.'"

"Oh, Arthur, don't say that. When God puts his hand on a creature, it is time for us to lift ours off.—I feel so—so sorry for her," said Nina, wiping her eyes and sobbing, still. "She did not hurt us, only for a time, and who knows but through the sorrow she brought upon us she in some way added to our happiness afterwards. Let us hold nothing against her, but forgive, as we hope to be forgiven.—I blame myself for not trying harder when I was with Emma Lee to lead her to God. I am afraid that the light that I had I 'kept under a bushel.'"

"Nina, my dear wife," replied her husband, "your pure face and lovely character have been a light to me since I first knew you! What people are in their hearts and lives counts for more than all the conscious effort they may make in influencing those around them. Oftentimes aggressive

effort, of even good people, does more harm than good, and repels when it was meant to attract; but no one on earth, who is not thoroughly selfish and hard-hearted, can help being influenced and attracted by a pure, good life. Emma Lee's heart, as she said, was as hard as adamant. If being with you had no effect on her, don't think that anything more you might have said or done could have influenced her. After she had gone through some of the misery she had brought on others, however, she repented and cried to God for mercy. So may be, after all, God saved her, and she'll lead a better life beyond."

"Of course God saved her. God could not turn away any child, no matter how sinful, who truly repented and cried to him for mercy. Why, even earthly parents would forgive and love and help a wayward child, when he went to them and asked it. How much more will God, the depth of whose love and pity for his children is beyond our power to comprehend, hear the faintest cry of a wretched child who calls to him for help and forgiveness."

"Yes, I verily believe only those can't be saved who won't be saved," said Arthur. "What a sublime dignity yet an awful responsibility God bestowed on man in giving him his free will, his power of choice!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

"This world is just a stage of life, and, as Shakespeare said, 'we are the players in youth and age'; but, though death may end the performance here, after death comes more vital life, either for better or worse!" said Nina. "My part on the 'stage of life' has indeed been varied. When I was a happy child, my life was sweet sunshine. Trouble came soon, and my after years were from sunlight to shadow. I would think, 'I am so happy,' and before I could realize my situation, I would find myself in another sea of gloom. I used to wonder why I was so afflicted, but now no wonder comes to me. It was just life and the stage of life.

"My last great sorrow was my father's death — and that brought round our meeting, my husband! — He was a devout Christian and a devoted father, and often I long to see him again, and shall, some day. When I go to his grave, I know that it is only to look upon the mound where his lifeless body was laid to rest. His spirit is now in the great beyond.

"What deep sweetness even the terrible sor-

row of death has in it, when, as we stand by the bed of a dear one who is preparing to go from this world, we hear him say: 'I am ready and waiting my Father's call. Goodbye till we meet again, on the beautiful shore beyond'!

"How sublime is an abiding faith in God! Through faith we may come out victorious over all. We may be afflicted, our paths may be dark, and it may seem that we are at the end,— we have come to a wall— we look over and deep water is on the other side; but, if we have a pure faith, we can just shut our eyes and leap, knowing that, though the water be dark and deep, all must come right in the end.

"I believe that my mother would not have been at my side this moment had it not been for our prayers and our faith. It seemed to me, when I heard she had died, that heaven was a long way off and our separation would be almost endless; but since papa has gone, and through faith I have gained a larger view, heaven seems nearer,— just across the dark river of death is not very far! 'And there shall be no more death there,' as we read in God's Word. That is a comfort. Death is an evil— an adverse destiny— with which every child of humanity has to grapple sooner or later. Death is one of the great facts of our being, a

law of our natures, and however solemn the thought or gloomy the reflection, it must with every one of us come to this, even this, at last.

"We can not help asking, 'Is it true of man and earth that this is the inevitable lot of all?' and we know that it is.

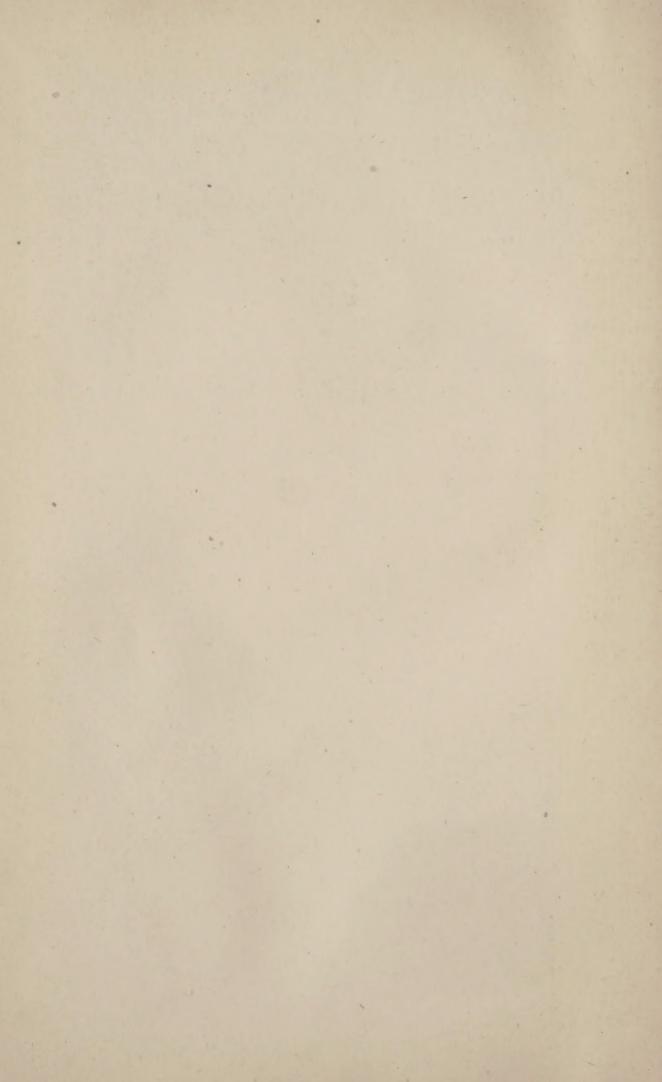
"All must die, soon or late; but we have the sweet evidence that death places the good of earth beyond the reach of the vanities and disappointments of life. They who have chosen God for their portion can go 'God-like' through — to where real and apparent are the same, where reality itself is less unreal and the veriest vanities are vain no more; where existence shall never again be billowed with human agitation, nor exhibit its myriad unsubstantial images of air, its melancholy illusive ghosts of dead unknown and blighted hopes, but where the manifestations of immortality bound forever the vanities of this life with the overwhelming realities of another and a better. The angel of hope is present with the angel of death, to guide and console, and having a well defined consciousness of immortal life, we feel that they but cast earth's throbbing dust aside to put the diadem of deathless glory on. They are done with earth - all is elevated and extra-mundane. Their heavenly mansions sweep in on their minds' vision

as the promised sequel to all the tears and darkness of earth, and as they pass the cold and turbid river of death they behold the splendors of immortality streaming abroad and investing their heavenly home.

"We must ourselves die, to finish the picture, and when we do, and the inevitable death lot shall throw our thrilling gaze athwart, the gathering gloom will vanish forever, and we shall say, 'Amen.'"

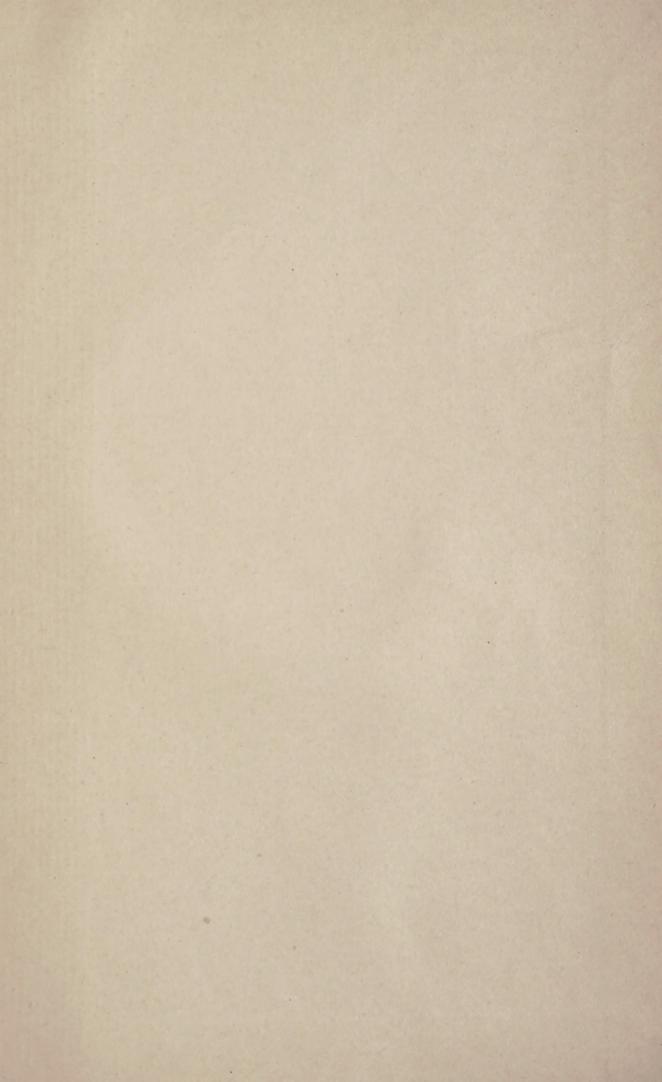
THE END.

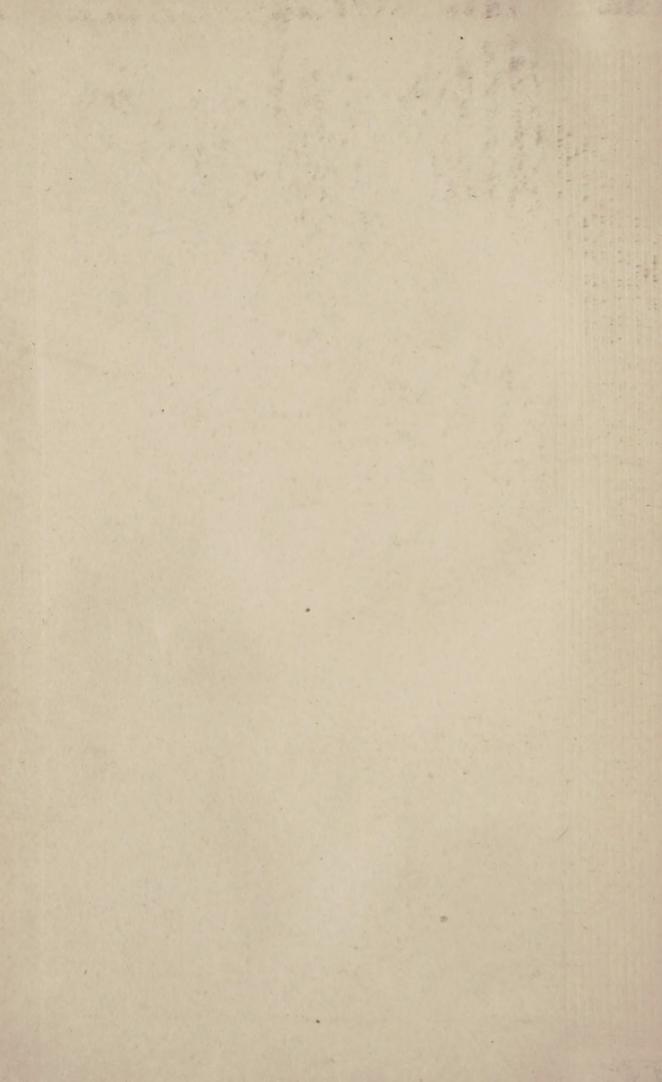














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